The Dissertation Committee for Hyunjung Lee Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Global Fetishism: Dynamics of Transnational Performances in Contemporary South Korea

Committee:

Elizabeth Richmond-Garza, Supervisor

Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang

Robert M. Oppenheim

Stacy Wolf

Alexandra K. Wettlaufer

Global Fetishism: Dynamics of Transnational Performances in Contemporary South Korea

by

Hyunjung Lee, B.A.; M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

May, 2008

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the help, care, and input of several individuals. I owe a debt of gratitude, especially, to my supervisor Dr. Elizabeth Richmond-Garza whose guidance, understanding, and strenuous support helped me work through my dissertation smoothly: she made the writing process enjoyable, always keeping my reasoning on the right track. I am also very thankful to my committee members and their generous intellectual support: Dr. Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang for sharing her insights on the importance of inter-Asian relationships and theoretical positioning; Dr. Alex Wettlaufer for her warm encouragement and insightful comments; Dr. Robert Oppenheim for our stimulating conversations about the Korean social scenes; and Dr. Stacy Wolf for inspiring me to approach theatre and performance as something alive and constantly moving.

I am very fortunate to have a valuable network of friends who helped me through my dissertation process. To Kay Robin Alexander for her careful editing of my manuscript. To Moonyoung Kim and Mikyung Park for always being a constant support-system. To Dr. Chang-soo Hong who sent me the recording of *Nanta*. To Dr. Hye-Joon Yoon and Dr. Kuho Cho for their moral supports. To Hannah Lee for generously sending the 2002 World Cup documentaries and *The Last Empress* VCD.

To Young-sun Shin and Hye-jung Joo for our talks on Korean theatre in the summer of 2006. To So-young Park who took care of my box full of research materials that crossed the Pacific Ocean twice. And finally, to Younghan Cho who carefully read many drafts of this work, and who helped me stand confident about what I have done in this project.

A special thanks also goes to my parents who have been patiently looking after me with generosity and love. I am eternally grateful to my mother Youngsoon Hong, who is the source of my happiness and my reason for living.

Global Fetishism: Dynamics of Transnational Performances in Contemporary South Korea

Publication No._____

Hyunjung Lee, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2008

Supervisor: Elizabeth Richmond-Garza

Using South Korea's transnational performances as a case-study, this dissertation examines the cultural implications of the much-celebrated Korean model of national development. Starting with two contemporary South Korean performances—*The Last Empress, the Musical* (1995), and *Nanta* [*Cookin'*] (1997), a nonverbal performance—I explore how the producers' commitments to South Korea's cultural development are manifested in these productions. Situating these performances within the South Korean social context of the mid-1990s, I explore how the reinvention of Korean traditional cultures represents both national capacity and responds to calls for globalism without losing Korean identity.

In the first chapter, my analysis of *The Last Empress* illustrates how local desire for global success resulted in a perpetuation of a Broadway-style musical in a Korean mode. I argue that, while the play utilizes its female character's pioneering image to claim a place for the musical in the global era, it simultaneously pulls her back into the

traditional domain. With *Nanta* [*Cookin'*] in the following chapter, I argue that the production's commercial accomplishment lies in its strategic blending of pan-Asian cultural elements and the use of food without language which well co-operated with the burgeoning cultural tourism industry in South Korea.

Extending my argument further, I conclude with an analysis of global-national interplay as they were played out at the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup. As a way of understanding the nationalistic fervor during the event, I suggest that the mass festive rally functions as a "social performance." In these performances, Korean nationalism, conjoined with global desire, was reconfigured through spontaneous gatherings, styles, fashions, expressions, and gestures. Like its theatrical counterparts, the World Cup rally insists on Korean-ness as what qualifies South Korea to be a global player.

I conclude by offering the concept, "global fetishism," to explicate the complex and even contradictory assimilation of the national into the global in these performances. They are showcases for how globalization taps into the local rhetoric of development, charged by South Korea's inherent nationalism. If for South Korea "global" is synonymous with glamorous cultural success, in each context it is precisely the return to the local which permits global fetishism.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1. Introduction: Performing to Accomplish the Global in the National[1]

1. Introduction

My dissertation examines how the emergence of South Korean transnational theatrical productions and performance since the mid-1990s contributes to (re)constituting a sense of the national or the nation-ness in the context of a simultaneous desire for cultural globalization. By exploring the cultural implications of the much-celebrated Korean model of social and cultural development envisioned in these performances, I trace how these projects envisage the nation's desire for global visibility and success and explore the implications of their approach both in a Korean and a transnational context.

This research not only examines local cultural specifics, it also explores, in light of the pervasive influence of South Korean nationalism, the interaction of national and transnational spectacles. Through analyses of a musical, *The Last Empress* (1995) and a non-verbal performance, *Nanta* [*Cookin'*] (1997), I illustrate how the national motivation of global success resulted in a Korean brand of Western theatrical genres. I then use a theory of performance and ritual to deconstruct the global-national interactions in the

[1] All translations from Korean sources in this dissertation are my own unless otherwise noted.

mass rally held in 2002 for the Korea-Japan World Cup so as to analyze the ways that Korean nationalism has simultaneously reconfigured in the midst of citizens' spontaneity, expressions and gestures and conjoined with global desire. This juxtaposition of theatrical performances and live, festive rallies allows me to reveal a mechanism of communication wherein citizens' national sentiments and South Korean cultural products intersect and thereby shape each other.

An examination of these performances as well as their performativity illuminates the ways in which the idea of the national has been assimilated (conflated) with that of the global in South Korea, as it encounters the globalized era. In other words, I suggest that these productions and related discourses in South Korea promoted and even identified the "global" as a way of reinventing national tradition and identifying its unique Korean-ness. The underlying rationale in these performances, which seeks and confirms South Korea's capability in the global arena, expresses both the nation's doubts about its global competitiveness and its anxiety as it pursues its global desires. These theatrical productions function and evolve as they strive to supplement the gap between the national and the global by searching for, as well as reconstructing, a vision of unique Korean-ness.

As I closely dissect the obsession with the global that surrounds these performances, I show how, in the process of achieving that global standard, the very term "the global" becomes an idealized, empty signifier. The performances and their ways of constructing a sense of nation-ness assume that Korea has already been part of the global. At the same time, however, contradictorily, these productions and the conversations surrounding them constantly remind spectators of Korea's lack of global sensibility as

well as the nation's crucial need and desire to counter this lack by striving to create a global identity and presence. Using the performance as a lens, I focus on how the idea of global in this national context could remain as a persistent lack, an imagined censoring machine, and a vision of magnificent glamour, the superior "Other." In this view, because the global is pitted against a mythical invention of national uniqueness, there are moments in which the global and the national overlap and interfere.

The contradictory linkage of the global with the national illustrated in this work suggests a different dimension to the existing discussions of global-local interaction. In postcolonial/globalization theory, theoretical terms such as "cultural hybridity" or "mimicry" have been suggested as explanations for how the local encounters, negotiates, or even subverts the encroaching influence of globalization (also called "Americanization"). However, despite the valuable insights they offer, such approaches tend to assume the local as the opposite of the global, and consequently often end up fetishizing the idea of the local. That is, such concepts implicitly run the risk of taking for granted that the local always appropriates the global, and therefore that local responses automatically result in opposition and resistance. Rather than similarly romanticizing the idea of the local, this dissertation attempt to unveil more complex, multidimensional interactions between the global and the local.

Instead of taking for granted the dichotomy between the global and the local, this dissertation examines the multiple dimensions and roles of the local (national), and shows detailed, concrete actualizations of these encounters in the global era. By focusing on the performances and discourse about their border-crossing movements, this work illuminates how the idea of the global has been utilized for Korea's nationalistic interests

and ideologies as well as how the power of the national has been promoted and strengthened under the rubric of globalism.

2. Background

South Korea, Mid-1990s through Early Part of the Millennium

I begin by contextualizing these performances within South Korean society and related discourses that began in the mid-1990s and have continued through the first years of the new millennium. This is a period of intensive globalization (*segyehwa*, 1994-1997), followed by the national crisis predicated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) intervention (1997-2000), and concluded with the outburst of national excitement during the 2002 World Cup and its festive rallies. My reading of these performances as underpinned by socio-political settings helps explicate the extent to which South Korea's global behaviors and desires are interconnected with its sense of nation-ness.

The nationalistic policy discourse of *segyehwa* was declared in 1994 by the Young-sam Kim administration (1993-1998). This intense globalization discourse operated under a vision of developmentalism that championed greater efficiency for society as a whole (government, corporations, and citizens) as a vehicle for South Korea's continuous growth, and sought national reform as a way to achieve such efficiency. This developmental nationalism demanded that South Korea, through globalization, leap forward and become one of the world's advanced nations. *Segyehwa*

discourse, predicated upon the argument that the nation is crucially in need of globalization, was "held by not only the corporations but also the government, public, families and individuals; [the idea] was transmitted to the whole society through columns of major newspapers and special feature broadcasts."[2]

The developmentalist rhetoric of *segyehwa* ambitiously proclaimed a masculinist ideology that urged Korea to become a world-class superpower. In addition, *segyehwa*'s emphasis on "globalization in a Korean way" highlighted the importance of reconstituting Korean traditions as well as identity. Accordingly, traits conventionally associated with femininity, such as backwardness, vulnerability, and unreason, had to be eliminated. Not surprisingly, propaganda aired on public TV during the *segyehwa* era figuratively represents how this discourse was centered exclusively on the male subject:

Fig 1.1 (Left) *Segyehwa* publicity produced by Ministry of Public Information that was broadcast on public television between 1994 and 1996. The caption reads "21st Century, Our choice is the *segyehwa*." (Right) Another government advertisement for *segyehwa* that was aired on public television. The ending caption reads "*Segyehwa* begins with me." Video stills by the courtesy of Ministry of Public Information.[3]

---

[2] Myung Koo Kang (Myŏng-ku Kang), "Discourse politics toward neo-liberal globalization," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 1.3 (2000): 443-456.

[3] Ministry of Public Information, n.d, "Government advertisement data room," http://www.allim.go.kr

Both of the above advertisements feature Korean men as the ones who strongly stand for the reformed, advanced state of the nation by identifying young, determined-looking males as the nation's subjects who might take key roles in transforming South Korea via *segyehwa*. In the ad on the left, the camera closely focuses on the man's eye and then slowly zooms out, suggesting by gradual exposure of the entire physiognomy of this person in a neat suit and tie that this confident, successful-looking man aspires to choose *segyehwa* as his new vision. As the camera zooms out, a deep male voice-over vehemently narrates that "a wise nationhood must choose *segyehwa*; In the 21st Century, our choice is the *segyehwa*." In short, the ad presents a portrait of this male as an icon of model citizenship. This image of a corporate, competitive, strong masculinity leaves no place for women and minorities; the ad fully conflates the image of this male with the picture of an advanced, competitive South Korea.

Similarly, the ad on the right features a younger-looking male, named Ki-sŏk Koh, this time clearly identified by a caption as "a history major student at Seoul National University." This ad showcases how an intelligent, patriotic young man struggles to accomplish what is immediately understood by Korean viewers as his duty to advance his country to become one of the top-tier nations in the global era. Near the end of the ad, the camera's focus on Ki-sŏk's fist suggests that he has accepted *segyehwa* as the rightful decision. Again, a male voice-over closes the ad:

> Today, I learn what path our nation should take. A country who actively encounters the changing world can be the leader of the history—this is the

---

(accessed 3 February 2008).

only truth. What should I do amidst the flow of globalization? *Segyehwa*. It should begin with me.

As these government-sponsored ads illustrate, *segyehwa* was embedded in a masculine, upward-mobilization discourse that reinforced competitiveness. They clearly reflect Young-sam Kim's vision of *segyehwa*, which was deeply rooted in his desire for South Korea to become a member of OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). To achieve this goal, his administration voluntarily endorsed a market liberalization policy as required by the globalization of capital, since the markets (financial, manufacturing, service industry) had to become more liberalized in order to become part of OECD.[4] Young-sam Kim claimed that once South Korea joined OECD, it would soon become one of the top-tier nations in the world. However, as a result of the abrupt market liberalization and the large amounts of foreign speculative capital flowing into the country, a foreign currency crisis occurred. Despite the popularity of *segyehwa*'s full-blown rhetorical gestures as a national discourse, the policy ultimately failed in November 1997, 10 months after South Korea became a member of the OECD, when the country was forced to rely on IMF support and was brought under its control.

The IMF intervention, which had been initiated by a shortage of foreign funds, was declared over by the South Korean government in August 2000; in the final years of the Young-sam Kim government, thereby creating an enormous, nationwide economic crisis. Because of a shortage of foreign investment capital, the government requested a bailout program from the IMF to manage this economic downfall; consequently, the

[4] Kang, 450-1.

IMF-mandated restructurings brought about mass layoffs and early retirements, which in turn created a huge sense of failure and depression both for individual Koreans and Korean society as a whole. Between 1997 and 2000, the per capita GNP dropped from US$10,000 to US$6,000; the number of unemployed increased from 1.5 million to 5 million; the banks' interest rates soared above 25%, and hundreds of firms and businesses went bankrupt every day.[5]

Although the idea of national development turned out to be a myth as citizens witnessed their government's powerlessness in the face of nationwide frustration, many South Koreans recognized the economic crash as a result, at least in part, of the encroachment of globalization and the IMF. Therefore, nationalism still proved to be an effective motivator in people's lives that "[...] would not be abandoned easily in spite of the country's frustration [….] even when it disappoints, nationalism [appealed] to people emotionally."[6]

The IMF intervention and its aftermath in the post-*segyehwa* era, as well as the inherent workings of nationalism in South Korea, form the crucial setting for the latter

---

[5] Ibid, 444.

[6] Younghan Cho (Yŏng-han Cho), "The National Crisis and De/Reconstructing Nationalism in South Korea during the IMF Intervention," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 9.1 (2008): 82-96. A good example of the effective workings of nationalism during IMF intervention was the government's Gold Drive Campaign of 1998, in which citizens were asked to donate their private gold to help reduce the national debt. The campaign attracted a great number of citizens: 200,000 people participated in the event in January 1998, and total earnings were approximately $2 billion (*Chosun Ilbo*, 19 October 1998). Quoted in Cho.

texts in this dissertation: the production of *Nanta* and its contributions to the development of cultural tourism industry; the increasing visibility of the cultural geography of East Asia in the domestic discourse; and Korean supporters' performativities and expressions of national pride during the 2002 World Cup.

Development of the cultural industry in South Korea was regarded as a possible strategy to bring about recuperation from the national depression brought on by the IMF intervention. Dae-jung Kim's administration (1998-2003), which succeeded Young-sam Kim's presidential term, became actively involved in the cultural sector and emphasized both field culture and cultural tourism as new areas for industrial/financial development. But more important was the country's increasingly enthusiastic embrace of its own popular culture and the growing export of Korean popular culture to East and Southeast Asia (a.k.a. "the Korean Wave"), which lead to the gradual revisioning of the cultural geography of Asia as a new stage upon which Korea should launch a unique, remarkable national brand. Consequently, the importance of South Korea's connections with neighboring Asian countries began to include the necessity of creating a new, pan-Asian cultural identity within Korean domestic discourse. This idea was quickly recognized by the general public as vital for national well-being and prosperity.

East Asia's increasing visibility at the backdrop of Korean national success was also one of the crucial social contexts in the 2002 World Cup. Most of all, the Asian setting of the 2002 World Cup (co-hosted by South Korea and Japan) was recognized as pivotal because the games were held in Asia for the very first time. Moreover, as the first Asian team in history to compete in the World Cup semi-finals, the Korean national football team was called the "Pride of Asia" and expressions of excitement and national

confidence that South Korea would not only reemerge in the global arena but also would rise at the heart of Asia were shrewdly enacted through the people's supporting rallies as well as via the government which orchestrated these rallies. Indeed, for the South Korean governments and the citizens alike, the 2002 World Cup provided the perfect opportunity to rebound from national depression.

Significance of the Performances under Construction: from Segyehwa to the New Millennium

THE LAST EMPRESS

Arts Communication International (A-Com International), South Korea's first professional musical company founded by Ho-jin Yun in 1991, produced *The Last Empress* in 1995. The company's establishment was supported by domestic theatre artists and producers who believed that theatre companies in South Korea must become competitive in the global era, should attract financial investment, and cultivate not only the domestic market but also international markets.

Against this backdrop, the tremendous impact and success of Broadway musicals imported to South Korea since the late 1980s formed a strong impetus for the creation of a Korean version of a Broadway musical; Yun did exactly this with *The Last Empress*. His nationalistic ambition to demonstrate the competitive quality of a South Korean cultural product led him to stage the musical on Broadway as well as other Western metropolises, in spite of having no guarantees from the venues. Just as A-Com had to

rely on domestic funding such as profits from local audiences, corporate sponsorships and even government subsidies for the production's international tours, Yun's patriotic commitment was nourished by Korea's national obsession with the global and its desire for national development as illustrated by the discourse of *segyehwa*. In my analysis of Yun's musical, I focus on how the construction of its female heroine, Empress Myŏngsŏng or Queen Min, is underpinned by masculinist ideas of national development, and how the play's portrayal of its title character reflects the gendered nationalism in contemporary South Korea.

NANTA

Like theatre producers and artists such as Yun, Sŭng-hwan Song, the producer of *Nanta* (1997) has also expressed concern and criticism about South Korean theatre companies' inefficient business systems and budgetary shortfalls. Song's awareness of these meager conditions prompted him to adopt a corporate system at PMC (Performance, Music, Cinema), the performance company founded by Song that created *Nanta*.

As Yun's obsessive aspirations toward the global (symbolized by his strenuous endorsement of "Broadway") eventually matched the exuberant *segyehwa* rhetoric that overlooked actual domestic social conditions, *Nanta* garnered financial success in both domestic and overseas markets. Promoted as the first Korean-brand nonverbal performance, *Nanta*'s keen global and regional marketing strategy allowed it not only to

profit on Broadway but also to attract and connect with Asian spectators/tourists in South Korea.

Nanta's transnational movement, which shows its responsiveness to Asian regional tastes, illustrates how South Korean discourse on globalization has gradually transcended the dichotomy between Korea and the West (known as "America" or "Broadway") via performance elements that, by revealing inviting qualities of Korean culture in the context of other Asian cultures, reflect ideas of Asian solidarity or pan-Asianism that were almost absent from earlier discourse on the production of *The Last Empress* and the related issues of South Korea's *segyehwa*. At the same time, however, *Nanta*'s regional success and ties with other Asian countries also express South Korea's national desire to be at the center of Asia.

Nonetheless, my analysis of *Nanta* demonstrates that the production still identifies "Broadway" as its ultimate goal and affirms that performing *Nanta* on Broadway symbolizes its success. However, various aspects—both of its detailed elements in performance and its global promotion—indicate its openness as well as interactions with different cultures and audiences, particularly in the context of the regional. This inclusive nature contrasts strikingly with the exclusionary rationale of *The Last Empress*, which actually hinders the play's possible communications outside the national boundary. Contrary to *The Last Empress*, which was hyped as the first Korean musical on Broadway, *Nanta*'s promotional process and global marketing strategies show that its producer is not simply obsessed with the term "Broadway": he does not identify performing *Nanta* on Broadway as an abstract symbol of national development. Furthermore, *Nanta*'s regional success both in terms of financial sustainability and of the

numbers of its audience from different countries indicates its efficient combination of national, regional and global elements.

2002 KOREA-JAPAN WORLD CUP

My analysis of the nationwide rally during the 2002 World Cup illuminates the social climate in South Korea that prompted and shaped the two aforementioned theatrical productions and the entailed discourses about the nation's global success. The discussions in the earlier part of this dissertation consider the visions of and the desires for nation-ness created in South Korea as it dealt with the process of globalization starting in the mid-1990s. Such spectacles of desire—produced throughout the phases of *segyehwa*, IMF crisis, and discourses about pan-Asianism—are discussed as projected through and shaped by the theatrical space. In this sense, the social spectacles during the World Cup in South Korea can be viewed and treated as one magnificent social performance that internally visualizes the nation's recent past and memories. Within the scenario of the 2002 World Cup, we may witness both the continuity and the discontinuity of the *segyehwa* myth and Koreans' wish to confirm the termination of the IMF tragedy, as well as South Korea's immense desire to be at the enter of Asia, as seen in its (self) designation as the "Pride of Asia."

By juxtaposing these theatrical spaces with the spontaneous, live rallies during the sporting event, I hope to examine how these different strands of desires would fare in an open space filled with people's lived experience—as a way of viewing how the

individual citizens would produce, consume, embody, and transform the nationalistically expressed passion through mass, festive rallies.

3. Locating the Project

National--Global Dynamics

Examinations of the irregular, uneven, and sometimes alienating modes of interactions between the global and the national in this dissertation are related to existing theories of global-local problematics. Although the core theme of globalization discourse discussed in this project has been produced in response to the impending force of the global in South Korea during the 1990s, a close look at these issues shows that the influence of globalization cannot be the sole unifying cultural carrier. Major ideas explored in this project are related to the claim that

> people, machinery, money, images, and ideas now follow increasingly nonisomorphic paths; of course, at all periods in human history, there have been some disjunctures in the flows of these things, but the sheer speed, scale, and volume of each of these flows are now so great that the disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture.[7]

---

[7] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996): 37.

As a way of contributing other examples within this "disjunctive flow of things," I suggest how the concept of the global could be, in some instances, deemed an empty signifier, a signifier that has no need of the signified within certain contexts provided by South Korean social discourses. Here, the "global" becomes a fetish, a glamorous entity whose meaning stems not from within but is assigned from without. Accordingly, at certain moments, the global becomes eclipsed by or conflated with the national, where the latter becomes grotesquely magnified or exaggerated in the name of national uniqueness and capacity. For the sake of situating the transnational performances and the ensuing discourses, I suggest that the term "national" is more appropriate than the term "local" in this context, because the term rightly indicates and draws attention to the relevant makings of nation-ness.

Originally, problems associated with the issues of national cohesion as well as the process of nation-making generated by South Korean discourses were raised and approached via theoretical concepts suggested by Homi Bhabha and other theorists of postcolonial studies.[8] Bhabha's method of deconstructing the bipolar dynamics between the "Third World" and the "First World," or "colonized" and "colonizer," were useful when I was examining the correlations between the flows of globalism and the national in the Korean context. Also, Bhabha's criticism of the homogenous, horizontal view of

---

8 For example, see Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967); *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995).

history did support the particular problematic of the global vs. the national raised in this project. For him, such historicism generates "progressive metaphor of modern social cohesion—*the many as one* [italics in the original]—shared by organic theories of the holism of culture and community" that distorts or erases those fragmentary spaces occupied by the culturally dislocated subjects that do not fit into the picture of national representations.[9] He introduces concepts such as "in-between," "mimicry," and "cultural hybridity" as a way of offering insights into how the colonized (i.e., the local) resists the encroaching power of the colonizer (the global); these concepts are also suggested as a method of deconstructing the monologic historicities of nations that dominate people under grand narratives and fixed nationalisms.

Indeed, while discussing writers such as Nadine Gordimer or Toni Morrison, Bhabha suggests that the "ambivalence of the colonial rule" enables a capacity for resistance in the performative "mimicry" of the "English book."[10] Despite his valuable efforts to illuminate the location of culture in the marginal, haunting, and alienated spaces between hegemonic global formations, Bhabha's methods of deconstruction rely on a presumption that the global-local dynamic involves polarity, which assumes that

> we live in a world of local assertions *against* globalizing trends, a world in which the very idea of locality is sometimes cast as a form of opposition or resistance to the hegemonically global (or one in which the assertions of "locality" is seen as the pitting of subaltern "universals" against the

[9] Bhabha, 204.

[10] Ibid., 121-131.

"hegemonically universal" of dominant cultures and/or classes) (italics in the original).[11]

The South Korean issues positioned in this dissertation within the flow of globalization do not entirely involve forms of opposition or "local assertions." Instead, issues and conversations around transnational performances reveal how the nation's desire for globalization/modernization gets intertwined with its own desire for national development and success; that is, the national production in this context usurps and constructs its label as the global product for its own satisfaction and glory. In the case of *The Last Empress* and its travel to Broadway, for example, we see how its producers, as well as domestic media and audiences, pursue the term "Broadway" as an empty signifier for the global in order to prove the advancement of the nation's cultural industry.

In sum, the case here (both theatrical productions and the process of its makings) illustrates how the apparent interactions between the global and the national actually demonstrate a mode of alienation wherein the notion of "global" becomes utterly meaningless, a fetish, or an empty label used in service of the national interest. Performance elements in *The Last Empress* show how this magnification of the national and its esoteric, exclusivist idea of Korean-ness are visualized via gendered nationalism,

---

[11] Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity," in *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (London: Sage Publications, 1995): 29.

as its heroine becomes fetishized within a grand, Broadway-style musical in a Korean mode.[12]

Paralleled with the alienation between the national and the global, *Nanta*'s transnational, inter-Asian movements and domestic discourses add another complication to global-national dynamics. The examples associated with *Nanta* suggest a case in which the idea of the global and its associated local paradigms could be separated from a simple dichotomy between "the dominant hegemony (global, or Americanization)" and "the local" as a pure receiver or respondent. Here, the images and embodiments of East Asian intra-regional communications projected through the performance reveal that the product does not travel upon a single, one-way street between the global and the national, but is in fact involved in a much more complicated movement within the confluence of national-regional-global. As we will see later, South Korean discourses around the international promotion of *Nanta* reveal how the cultural geography of Asia becomes understood as a strategic middle ground, to be utilized by Korean cultural producers on their way to the U.S., understood as symbolizing "the global." Therefore, the hierarchical order of "national" → "Asian regional" → "the global/U.S." has been deemed a strategic scheme.

Similarly, although Bhabha's concept of "cultural hybridity" does offer valuable insights that suggest a location for populations in the midst of global-local interactions, it does not adequately fit nor explain the situation considered by this project, wherein we

---

[12] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

witness magnification of the national that is always embedded within social discourses on globalization and transnational performances. The term is a shorthand, describing nations as constructions that arise from the "hybrid" interaction of competing cultural publics. For Bhabha, the existing boundaries of identity, affiliation, belonging, and difference dissolve day by day; thus, to him, cultural practices and representations of nationality/ethnicity are not necessarily reproducible from a fixed set of thoughts and traditions.

Bhabha's concept, which does explain the malleability of national borders and boundaries, tends to be more applicable to cultures and/or populations that have undergone longer, more intense colonial, multicultural encounters as well as to those with greater mobility. However, the productions under discussion here precisely inscribe past "myths-of-the-authentic-tradition" ("uniquely Korean") as they are constructed into a justifiable, normative social discourse.[13] Contrary to Bhabha's theoretical concerns, my readings of these performances and their social contexts show that "unifying discourse of 'nation,' peoples,' or authentic 'folk' tradition, […] culture's particularity [*are* not only] referenced"[14] but are renovated and reinvented as they are marketed to be, and interpreted as, exclusive sources of nation's ultimate fame, competitiveness, and success in the global era. For example, the introduction of the shamanic ritual in *The Last Empress* for its Broadway premiere has been explicated both as a way to preserve native cultural heritage and as a way to contend with Korea's risk of being marginalized

[13] Ibid., 247.

[14] Ibid.

by globalization. Thus, although the process of globalization does involve homogenization of national cultures, conversely it intensifies the process of national attachment:

> The globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization, but globalization involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenization (armaments, advertising techniques, language hegemonies, and clothing styles) that are absorbed into local political and cultural economies, only to be repatriated as heterogeneous dialogues of national sovereignty, free enterprise, and fundamentalism in which the state plays an increasingly delicate role […] In general, the state has become the arbitrageur of this *repatriation of difference* (in the form of goods, signs, slogans, and styles) (italics in the original).[15]

The show's version of "authentic Korean-ness" via traditional, gendered representations of distinctive national cultural forms is motivated and justified by rhetoric that presents the refashioning of the unique Korean-ness ("our culture") as the only way to promote the product in the world market.

Why Performance?

The primary thesis of this project lies within my conviction that performances and theatre spaces themselves are very much part of greater social events and that they

[15] Appadurai, 42.

participate in both structuring and transmitting national (or regional) identities as well as the nation's desire for global visibility and success. Moving beyond performance as a theatrical genre, I envision how the theatre (i.e., the totality of performances, plays, bodies, and theatre spaces) is inseparable from our living surroundings and, furthermore, how the theatre both shapes and forges social memories, values, and gender roles, as well as historical traumas. Distinct from media, performance and theatre require human presence as audiences, participants, or witnesses; it forces us to engage ourselves and, by "being there," to build connections within the live, immediate productions of knowledge, emotions, images, and gesticulations. Therefore I envision these moments of physical encounters, border-crossings, as well as the immediacy of the context, as one great "scenario"[16] that allows us to see and experience patterns of national/cultural expressions that are not readily reduced to fixed, static narrative descriptions.

I juxtapose the 2002 World Cup domestic rallies and the two full-scale theatre productions in order to see not only how performances contribute to the production of meaning-making paradigms, but also how such paradigms reflect and shape social environments and behaviors. Various scenes and imagery enacted during the 2002 World Cup—including supporters' festive rallies, newspaper reports, campaigns, street displays, ads, TV commercials, chants, cries, placards, flagging, mottos, etc.—can be seen as extensions of the core rationale and motifs embedded in the two theatrical performances. Along this fine line between the theatrical and the real, we witness how

---

[16] My use of the term "scenario" here has been borrowed from Diana Taylor's use of the same term in *The Archive and the Repertoire: performing cultural memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003): 28-33.

the nation and its people are meant to revolve around two strands of contradictory desires under an imagined global gaze: to become global citizens and to strengthen their sense of nation-ness. The goal of these desires is to become, at this juncture of self-hate and self-love, proud Koreans.

The nation's colonial past and the glory of *segyehwa*, symbolized by Queen Min in *The Last Empress*, and the regional ambition witnessed in *Nanta*, were transferred into the World Cup, thereby creating a mechanism of communication activated by people's sense of nation-ness and their performative embodiments before a global spectatorship. In this sense, the 2002 World Cup rallies and so forth can be seen not only as a collection of acts, but as an extension of some scenes from the two theatrical productions.

As a way of envisioning how performance transmits and reactivates memories, traces, histories, and embodied actions between the fictional and the real, I articulate the concept of "ghosting" as visualization that continues to act upon perceived reality even as it transcends the boundary of theatrical space.[17] I use this concept in the conclusion of this dissertation, which continues my discussion of how the image of Empress Myŏngsŏng has been reshaped and maneuvered in South Korea via TV dramas, music video, and film. "Ghosting" suggests how performance visually represents an invented national fantasy and desire, how it brings back the old dramas, the ghosts, and the traditions, reframes them in the present mode, and attempts to influence reality both for individuals and society in the global era.

---

[17] Ibid., 143.

These performing stages, both literally and symbolically, as both theatrical and real, are deemed as the national stage that will be seen by global audiences. However, possibly neither the actual presence of global spectators nor their actual assessments were the key issue, as long as these stages are to be seen as evidence that the nation is ready to be a global leader. The existence of this contradiction is proven by the imagined global internalized, amongst the people, as the everlasting lack.

4. Methodology

In order to analyze the very different performance genres and modes which my dissertation constitutes, I employed content analyses in combination with archival research on Korean nationalism and on South Korean media discourses about globalization and cultural industry from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. This interdisciplinary approach enabled me to analyze the performances in correlation to their evolving social contexts.

For the analyses of *The Last Empress* and *Nanta*, I focused on the plays' scripts, tapes of live performances, and archival materials such as program notes, poster ads, photographs of particular scenes, producers' autobiographical narratives, interviews, and domestic and international reviews that document the play's production and reception. Of course, I also used my own experiences and observations as an audience member (during my summer breaks in Seoul, in 2002 and 2005) to help explain how these

productions and theatrical spaces accommodate spectators and their live participation at certain moments.

In addition, to explicate and position these performances within the contexts of *segyehwa*, cultural globalization within South Korean theatrical domain, and the active development of Korea's cultural industry, I consulted and analyzed self-collected domestic news reports about the productions and their promotions. I searched for newspaper reports and editorials by using keywords such as "Broadway," "cultural globalization," "The Last Empress," and "Nanta" during the years 1994-2007 from www.kinds.or.kr, which provides major South Korean newspaper and magazine articles. Government publications on *segyehwa*, cultural industry development, and "Korean Wave [*hallyu*]" (especially during the late 1990s and early 2000) were also consulted.

To examine how the sense of nation-ness permeated public and private spaces during the 2002 World Cup, I used several qualitative research methods that embrace an interdisciplinary approach. The primary method used in this chapter is fieldwork as a participant-observer: from June through August 2002 I was in Seoul and took part in the supporting rally, where I cheered for the Korean national team and closely observed the zealous societal mood. For a precise explication of this phenomenon and its performance of nation-ness, my personal observations and anecdotes include theoretical and historical discussions about Korean nationalism and textual analyses of self-collected data such as newspaper articles, print ads, TV shows, commercials, and street photographs. Such collaborative analysis aims to provide a comprehensive description of the refashioned senses of nation-ness and national identity during this event as well as

to include useful political background and correlations between nationalism and globalization.

5. Chapter Breakdown

In Chapter Two, I discuss how *The Last Empress*, *the Musical* is posited under the rubric of cultural globalization within South Korean theatrical arena. Then, I explain how the discourse of *segyehwa* and the musical production's commitment to the nation's cultural development manifest in the musical to create an ambivalent onstage characterization of its female heroine. As I closely analyze selected scenes, I question how masculine developmentalism mediates the creation of a cultural product, and accordingly explicate how images of the feminine in the production are (re)configured. By illustrating how the national desire for global success resulted in a Broadway-style musical in a Korean mode, I argue that, caught between global demands and the nationalistic search for a unique Korean-ness, the musical manipulates the figure of Empress Myŏngsŏng, its heroine: while the play promotes her proactive, pioneering image in order to claim a place for the musical in the global arena, it simultaneously pulls her back into the traditional, gendered domain.

Chapter Three examines the mediating role of a nonverbal performance *Nanta*, vis-à-vis its interactions with the East Asian region and its negotiations between the national and the global. The first half explains the production's birth and its promotion

strategies and the second explains how the production of *Nanta* was fostered and promoted by the cultural industry's development in South Korea since the late 1990s. Then, through my analysis of the play's various representational styles and performance devices, I argue that while the theme of "Korean-ness" perpetuated in *The Last Empress* is based on an exclusivist, nationalistically isolationist rationale, the performance devices embodied in *Nanta*, together with its nonverbal-ness, highlight its own inviting qualities and sense of openness to other cultures outside the national boundary (especially East Asian cultures). Various images and actions within the show, and particularly its thematic focus on touristy activities and gastronomy, demonstrate how *Nanta* is engaged in communications and interactions with foreign audiences, especially those from other parts of East Asia. I trace how the production's creation of a globalized, international spectacle depends largely on reflections of pan-Asian communications, and how this aura enabled the production's financial success on Broadway. Finally, I question whether *Nanta*'s strategic fusion of pan-Asian cultural elements in a trendy nonverbal genre arises in part from South Korea's desire to be at the dominant center of Asia.

In Chapter Four, to extend my argument beyond theatrical representations of global-national (or global-regional-national) interplay, I conclude with an analysis of these issues as they played out at the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup. The South Korean supporters strongly identified with one another through nationally expressed excitement under the powerful motto, "We are One, We are Korean." I interpret this sporting event as a social performance in which the sporting event became a national stage, with Korean supporters as performers and the worldwide audience as spectators. During the days of these festive mass rallies, people's sense of their nation-ness, conjoined with their global

desires, was reconfigured through spontaneous gatherings, fashions, styles, expressions, and gestures. Similar to its theatrical counterparts, the festive rallies during the World Cup insisted that Korean-ness is what qualifies South Korea to be a global player.

Finally, I conclude by advancing a concept, "global fetishism," to explicate the complex and even contradictory assimilation of the national into the global, and continuous obsessions within the global in the national as illustrated in all of these performances. I suggest that these productions, both theatrical and popular, are showcases for how globalization taps into the national rhetoric of development, charged by South Korean society's inherent sense of nation-ness. If for South Korea the "global" is synonymous with glamorous cultural accomplishment, in each context it is precisely the return to the national that permits global fetishism.

Chapter 2. Ho-jin Yun's *The Last Empress, the Musical* (1995): Navigating the National and the Global in South Korea

1. Introduction

This chapter questions the ways that a South Korean theatre producer's adamant commitment to the nation's cultural development manifests in a musical production; specifically, how the nationalistic rationale of *The Last Empress, the Musical* creates an ambivalent onstage characterization of its female heroine. After exploring local promotion of development as a masculine ideal that globally advances the nation, how masculine developmentalism has mediated the creation of a cultural product, and how images of the feminine in the cultural product get (re)configured, I conclude that the play's portrayal of its central female character addresses the ambivalent position of women in contemporary South Korea as the nation confronts globalization.

The Last Empress, a South Korean musical directed by Ho-jin Yun that premiered in Seoul in 1995, was created as a direct response to the demands of globalization in South Korea during the early 1990s. Yun conceived the production in an effort to create a Korean version of a Broadway musical and aspired to stage it in Western metropolises such as New York, Los Angeles, and London. The strength of his ambition to demonstrate the competitive status of a South Korean cultural product to the world led him to embark on the international touring of the play with no guarantees from the performance venues. This patriotic commitment garnered considerable support and

encouragement from the South Korean public because it appealed to the average citizen's desire to meet global standards.

The musical is highly popular with South Korean audiences, at least in part because it was marketed, grandly, as the first Korean musical to be staged on Broadway. The production's aura as "theatre of success" resonated with both the public's desire for global advancement and with the nationalism that was so prominent in domestic discourse. Mainstream South Korean newspapers often mentioned this production as an example of the allure of global development and of Western success in a South Korean context.

Yun's goal of creating a sophisticated, Broadway-style musical resulted in a performance that traces both the life and the untimely, tragic death of Empress Myŏngsŏng (a.k.a. Queen Min, 1851–1895). In fact, Queen Min was at the heart of politics in the late-19th-century Korean monarchy and was an active agent for Korea's modernization. Her ambition and ability to accommodate foreign powers identified her as a target of the Japanese power structure. Condemned as a threat to Japan's imperial project of occupying Korea, Queen Min, the last empress of Korea, was brutally murdered by Japanese assassins.

Out of reliance, at least in part, on the significance of Queen Min as a promoter of the nation's modernization, Yun conceived his production based upon the active image of her reaching for the global stage. However, although the play clearly presents Queen Min as a herald of globalization, her characterization is ambivalently divided between a proactive global pioneer and a carrier of nation's tradition. While the production utilizes her pioneering image to further the musical's potential in the global arena, it

simultaneously grounds her within the traditional domain—both as a monarch and as a woman—by building her up as a literal bearer of the national tradition and also by confining her within a traditional female gender role in which she must fulfill her duties as a good wife and a nurturing mother.

The musical's double construction of this tragic heroine parallels the contradiction in the director's production rationale: Yun, endorsing his desire to catch up with global standards through his musical, uses Korean history and traditional culture in order to cultivate a cultural product that is both modern and uniquely Korean. Consequently, amidst this interplay between the global and the national, Yun manipulates Queen Min's character as a distinctive signifier of national identity.

In consideration of the South Korean sociocultural climate that prompted this production, the musical is heavily influenced by a particular nationalistic state and social project known as *segyehwa* (best translated as "globalization"). *Segyehwa*, which refers to globalization in a specifically South Korean domestic context, inclusive of all ages and economic strata, was an ambitious developmental policy launched in 1994, during Young-sam Kim's presidency. My own reading of *segyehwa* within this particular project notes an important contradiction, i.e. that it fails to address the problems of female citizens in either their public or private lives even though the central character is a woman.

As I contextualize the musical within *segyehwa* discourse, I analyze how it adopts and reproduces developmental rhetoric. The ultimate rationale of the performance addresses and satisfies the nation's desire for success in the global arena. However, through its characterization of the empress, the play also reveals a contradiction at the

heart of *segyehwa*, where desire for globalization and modernization intertwines with desire for the nation and its conservative traditions.

The dynamics of these contradictory desires, and the anxiety they produce, result in a problematic perpetuation of a stereotypically grand, Western-style musical in a Korean mode. This perpetuation is further fueled by the fact that the production does not transcend a nationalistic or even an essentialist view of and search for Korean-ness. In particular, the central role of Queen Min illuminates the gendered aspects of nationalism,[18] even though the performance purports to represent South Korea's desire to reach out to the world with its unique culture. I argue that although the musical does apparently redeem the empress as a heroine of history who bravely fought for Korea, her character within the play as a national heroine is actually deprived of agency and therefore that she is misrepresented.

I first discuss how the figure of Queen Min has been represented in *The Last Empress* and the ways this musical is positioned under the rubric of cultural globalization within South Korean theatre arena. Then I explain how *segyehwa* discourse drove the creation of this musical and reveal correlations between neo-traditionalist and globalizing impulses. In the latter part of the chapter, I closely analyze selected scenes from version performed at the Seoul Arts Center Opera Theatre in Seoul on 4 February 2005, focusing on how the performance represents the empress and femininity for the sake of national interests.

---

[18] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

2. Reinventing Empress Myŏngsŏng in the Midst of Globalization and the Consequence of Anti-Japanese Sentiment

The historical scenes involving Queen Min's murder in 1895 clarify how she was caught and victimized within a complex web of geopolitical dynamics. Moreover, a look at the nature of the colonial historiography invented and imposed by the Japanese upon Korea illuminates the extent to which the empress, and her significance, continued to be misrepresented through the flawed historical perspectives of modern South Korea.

The queen was the wife of King Kojong and the mother of Sunjong, who became the last king of the Chosŭn Dynasty (1392-1910). Empress Myŏngsŏng, the official title of the late queen, was an upgrade granted by King Kojong in 1897, two years after her assassination. During her lifetime, the empress' political status was powerful enough to threaten her father-in-law, Taewongun (Kojong's father), who acted as regent. Due to Taewongun's strictly closed-door, isolationist policy, demands from Western imperialist powers for trade and diplomatic relations were rejected and Korea remained the "Hermit Kingdom" until the end of the 19th century. Taewongun's disposition clashed with that of Queen Min, who insisted on claiming support from Western powers (especially Russia) to solve domestic problems, modernizing Chosŭn (an old appellation of Korea), and trying to save the declining monarchy at the onset of Japanese intrusion.

However, in 1895, the queen met her brutal end because the Japanese had identified her as an obstacle to their advancement onto the Korean peninsula. Miura, who had succeeded Inoue Kaorue as Minister Plenipotentiary of Japan in Seoul, plotted the murder on the orders of the Japanese prime minister. Under the direction of Miura

Goro, Japanese assassins stabbed the queen to death and burned her body. Although Miura was recalled to Japan the following year to face a perfunctory trial held in Hiroshima, he was acquitted.

After the murder, Japanese officials announced that the incident had been the result of an internal power struggle between Queen Min and her political rivals, notably Taewongun, her father-in-law.[19] Eventually this view, which has distorted Korean history well into the modern era, was solidified as part of the colonial historiography [*shikminsakwan*] invented by the Japanese to justify their annexation of Korea (1910-1945). According to this Japanese version, Queen Min had been widely condemned in her country as a manipulative woman who lusted for power and destroyed the nation by opening it up to foreign influences. Until recently, this view point was so effective that most South Koreans believed in the queen's so-called rebellion against Taewongun and that her attempts to modernize the Hermit Kingdom had actually jeopardized Korean traditions and identity.

As part of *segyehwa*'s goal of sociohistorical reformation, official attempts were made to counter negative perceptions of Empress Min. The musical production also seeks to restore her reputation, by concretizing an image of her as futuristic and proactive:

> *The Last Empress* is a portrayal of the fascinating life of Korea's beloved empress and her struggle to steer the hermit kingdom known as The Land

[19] Min-won Yi, *Myŏngsŏng Hwanghoo Sihae wa Akwanpach'ŏn* [The Assassination of Empress Min and Kojong's Escape to the Russian Consulate in Seoul] (Seoul: Gukhak Jaryowon, 2002) 47.

> of Morning Calm toward modernization [...] Devoted to her country and with a heart full of hope for the future, the empress dreamed that someday her country would take its place in the world. This show is, in a sense, an embodiment of her wish. The elements of her life and her dreams, all come together as Korea takes its place on the world's musical stage on Broadway, in West End, and LA.[20]

As South Korea began to face another globalizing force, nearly 100 years after her assassination, it was Empress Myŏngsŏng, not Queen Min, who began to be reinterpreted and even reinvented through re-enactions of the historical traumas of her life and appeals to nationalist sentiments. For example, school textbooks and various magazines have re-evaluated her "as a charismatic politician and diplomat who had the vision to lead the country into a new era."[21]

However, the musical's realization of the queen largely facilitates audiences' nationalistic responses via the influence of anti-Japanese sentiments. The production notes, for example, announce that "the musical names the character of Empress Myŏngsŏng as 'Queen Min (Minbi)' in order to address the colonialist Japan as evil, and thus, to intensify the anti-Japan mood in the drama."[22] The production also incorporates

---

20 A-Com International, n.d., "Greeting," Last Empress the Musical, http://www.iacom.co.kr (accessed 8 September 2007).

21 Haekyoung Lee (Hye-kyŏng Yi), "The Gazes of the Other upon the Life of Empress Myoungsung and Its Portrayal in *The Last Empress*," *Feminist Studies in English Literature* 10.2 (2002): 141-161.

22 A-Com International, n.d., "Why do we call Empress Myŏngsŏng as "Queen Min (*Minbi*)?," Last Empress the Musical, http://www.iacom.co.kr (accessed 8 September 2007).

the troubling issue of the queen's title in order to provoke anti-Japanese reactions and to intensify the dramatic effect. Usually, the title "Queen Min" [Minbi] carries a derogatory, misogynist connotation, a set of implications derived from Japanese colonial historiography meant to annul the significance of the Chosŏn monarchy and its sovereignty. In effect, the performance recycles the significance of the queen's assassination as a reliable source of dramatic effect.

The plot, which of course is rooted in the theme of Queen Min's sacrifice by assassination at the hands of the Japanese, further motivates anti-Japanese feelings [*banil gamjŏng*] by abruptly conjuring Korea's complex, colonial past with no attempt to further decipher the matter. Historical fact notwithstanding, the play's overt endorsement of anti-Japanese sentiment naturally positions the queen as a martyr, as when the conflation of "the victimized queen" and the image of a "mutilated Patria" are used as a cathartic device for South Korean audiences.

The musical, which follows Queen Min's life in the palace chronologically, presents her life and death as analogous to the final years of Chosŏn period. Its structure traces how Chosŏn failed once Queen Min fell under the hands of Imperial Japan, ending with a grand finale that stages her resurrection as she blesses Korea's eternal prosperity. The play opens with Queen Min's royal marriage to King Kojong and her coronation in 1866, when the queen promises both to serve the king and to remain the faithful "Mother of the Nation." Soon after, General Gye-hun Hong, who secretly admires the queen, swears to protect the royal family as he is made Chief of the Royal Guard.

Gradually, the play discloses the conflict between the queen and Taewongun, who is both the regent of Chosŏn and her father-in-law. The audience learns that Taewongun's isolationist politics prevent him from welcoming Westerners, whereas Queen Min is sympathetic to the modernizers. Fearing the queen's growing influence in the court, Taewongun publicly denounces her for her inability to conceive. Consequently, the angry queen brings a female shaman named Jinryŏnggun to the palace to perform a shamanic ritual for the conception of a son. When a son is born to the queen, she at last achieves her full political agency.

Next, she suggests that the king should declare direct rule and he obliges. Although Taewongun does not accept that his days as regent are over, he retires from the political domain. Meanwhile, all of Chosŏn suffers from disputes between the conservative isolationists and the modernizers even as it faces threats from the imperial powers (mainly Japan). The queen, who pursues modernization, decides to seek support from Russia in order to defend Chosŏn from Japan's gradual encroachment. Not surprisingly, Japan's Prime Minister Ito identifies Queen Min as an obstacle to colonization (his nation had long viewed the Korean peninsula as the bridge to the Great Far East). Inevitably, the Japanese proceed to the Korean palace to assassinate the queen.

The show's run at London's Apollo Hammersmith Theater in 2002 received harsh reviews. Reviewers criticized the innate nationalism employed as the musical's central motif, and London critics expressed their uneasiness regarding the staging of the anti-Japan sentiments that formed the core of the play's subject matter. According to Rhoda Koenig of *The Independent*:

> We also expect, not just for moral but dramatic reasons, a show that is not a jingoistic pageant. The Japanese, with whom the Koreans make an ill-starred alliance, are here shown to be greedy, treacherous and cruel, finally assassinating the brave queen [...] The sponsoring Korea Foundation says it "endeavors to…create a better world through international understanding," but I can't see *The Last Empress* bringing them to their feet in Tokyo.[23]

Michael Billington of *The Guardian* expressed a similar dismay:

> Life is full of mysteries. And one of them is what on earth this overblown Korean musical, part of the official cultural programmed for the World Cup [which is co-hosted by South Korea and Japan], is doing in downtown Hammersmith.[24]

Arguably, despite the mutual proximity and influence between South Korea and Japan, anti-Japanese themes remain prominent in South Korea. The 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup final match, for example, was co-hosted by both in spite of South Korea's deep desire to beat Japan, its former colonial master, in the spotlight of the global stage. Other demonstrations of the complex, double-edged relationship between Korean and Japan include emotionally charged historic arguments, for example over the distorted views of Japan's wartime past and imperialism presented in its textbooks. Other unresolved problems include painful disputes over specific historical traumas, such as

---

[23] *The Independent*, 6 February 2002

[24] *The Guardian*, 5 February 2002

compensation for and official apologies to Korean victims of Japanese sexual slavery (the infamous "comfort women") during the colonial era.

Indisputably, the musical's basic mise-en-scène manipulates Queen Min's death for the sake of provoking anti-Japan among its domestic spectatorship. The production's absolute justification of "Queen Min as the victim of notorious Japan" overtly provokes antagonism as this image converges with others such as "Mother of All People" and spiritual signifier (martyr) of the nation. It therefore makes sense that some interpret the murder scene, manipulated as spectacular evidence of the queen's sacrifice, as both a device to elicit anti-Japanese sentiments and a source of cathartic pleasure. These underlying themes tend to promote a simplistic equation of "anti-Japan = Korean nationalism = good." By this logic, nearly every criticism of Japan can be interpreted as pure Korean patriotism.

3. Situating *The Last Empress* under a Rubric of the Global

The Last Empress participates in a rubric of the global in South Korea in two ways. First, the production—Korea's first musical—was created as a deliberate response to the inundation of Broadway musicals between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s. In the name of acting against the "superior Other (a.k.a. Broadway)," the creation of *The Last Empress*, already supported by nationalist discourses, was favored by the majority of South Koreans. Second, the musical predicated the South Korean nationalist desire for cultural globalization that emerged in the 1990s. Many elements,

including the production's impetus, production conditions, and nationalist rationale purposely mimic how *segyehwa* elicited favorable support, and the musical overtly utilizes rhetoric calling for South Korea's cultural advancement to the global stage.

The Last Empress Faces Off Against Broadway Musicals

The creation of *The Last Empress* is generally read as a nationalistic backlash in response to the pressures of cultural globalization—namely the success of Broadway musicals in South Korea since the mid-1980s. Thus, a nationalistic consensus supported the groundwork for this musical. The nature of the collaboration behind the musical's production further explains its powerful support—from domestic mainstream culture, its authoritative figures, and the corporate capital associated with it.

A wide variety of Broadway musical performances were translated, adapted for performance by Korean actors, and exported to South Korea starting in the mid-1980s, including *The Sound of Music* (1981), *Oliver!* (1983), *West Side Story* (1987), *Cats* (1990), and *Guys and Dolls* (1983-91).[25] Their popularity with South Korean audiences, which increased through the decade, was further fueled by rapid globalization in the early 1990s. When domestic theater artists witnessed this, they sought to create and produce a well-made, Korean-brand musical.

---

[25] The dates inside the parentheses indicate the year in which these pieces were performed in South Korea.

In addition, South Korean theatre artists and producers who saw how the power of Broadway musicals secured the local market felt the need to create a musical company along corporate lines (i.e. a company that could attract domestic investment, train professional actresses/actors and staff, and pursue domestic and international markets). Therefore, at the start of 1990s, a number of existing theatre groups began to produce (sometimes with the assistance of TV soap opera creators) Korean musicals such as *Dance the Last Dance with Me* (1993) and *Carmencita* (1991); however, these suffered insufficient organizational groundwork and were unable to find writers and composers with the technical knowledge necessary for the musical genre.[26]

In response to demands for a corporate-style musical theatre company, several renowned theatre/literary artists and corporation owners established Arts Communication International (A-Com) in 1991 (the company would produce *The Last Empress* four years later). Most of its founders share high profiles—some are even government affiliates who already occupied authoritative positions in the South Korean cultural arena in 1991. For example, Ho-jin Yun, director of *The Last Empress* and the company's current CEO, was famous as the artistic director of the Seoul's experimental theatre group Silhŏm Company (1976-1992), had served as the artistic director at the Seoul Arts Center, and in 1997 was inducted into the *Okgwan* [Jade Crown] Culture Order by the government. (Additionally, in 1987, he earned a graduate degree in Performance at New York University and is now working as a professor.)

---

[26] Yŏn-ho Sŏ and Sang-wu Yi, *Uri yŏngŭk 100-nyŏn* [100 Years of Korean Theatre] (Seoul: Hyŏnam Sa, 2000): 341, 334-347.

Another founding member of A-Com, Mun-yŏl Lee, is a mainstream novelist and a notable conservative literary figure in South Korea. It was his original script *The Fox Hunt* [*Yŏwu sanyang*] from which *The Last Empress* was adapted in 1995.

Likewise, the play's cast and artistic creators have come from the elite of South Korea's mainstream scene. Actresses, especially those who played Queen Min, are trained in Western classical voice: both Won-jung Kim and Tae-won Lee, for example, received degrees in classical voice from Juilliard and have performed musical theatre and classical opera in major international venues. Kwang-lim Kim, who turned Mun-yŏl Lee's play into a musical, studied at UCLA, is a dean of the Korean National University of Arts, currently serves as the artistic director at Dongsung Art Center, and sits on the board of directors of Theatre Yŏnwu Company which he founded in 1978. Composer Hŭi-gap Kim, one of South Korea's veteran popular musicians, formed the troupe A1 in 1961 and sealed his prestigious reputation in 1967 with his first record, *Love, My Love*.

A-Com's model of successful globalization is communicated through images of affluence, good education, well traveledness, and upward mobility. The company takes pride in asserting that it is "the foundation of the Korean Musical":

> A-Com [has shown itself to be] the most advanced and leading musical production [company] in Korea by producing its original musical, *The Last Empress* (the first Broadway style musical in Korea) […], adopting the monthly payment system for the performers, managing the acting school, and playing *The Last Empress* to over 1 million people. A-Com will continuously stand above in the Korean musical market by advanced

thinking and endless challenging.[27]

The company's claim that its musical was "winning" against Broadway showed its desire to triumph over the very object it was attempting to imitate. Considering the nationalist context in which *The Last Empress* was created, competition with Broadway had two-fold significance both for the musical's producers and for South Korean audiences in general. Broadway simultaneously represented the desire to imitate and also a rival to conquer by creating an authentic Korean product.

Such images of hyper-development become naturalized or even idealized as they appeal to nationalistic sentiments. In the case of A-Com, they enabled its establishment to be considered a momentous event in South Korean theatre, the first professional South Korean theatre company to produce a glamorous, Broadway-type musical.

Segyehwa, or Globalization in a Korean Way

When *segyehwa* discourse emerged in 1994, it promoted the nation's upward mobility and global advancement. Yun's fanciful attempt at globalization similarly incorporates masculine ideology, toward the same goals. In a 1998 interview, the producer explained how his overall reasoning closely resonated with the ideology of *segyehwa*: "I fully believe that by the year 2000, Korean musical-theatre artists will be

---

[27] A-Com International, n.d., "Company," The Last Empress, the Musical, http://www.iacom.co.kr (accessed 8 September 2007).

able to compete with what gets produced on Broadway […] Over the years, we've made [Broadway musicals] ours. What we've created with *The Last Empress* is *uniquely Korean*."[28] His statements reflect the contradictory desires embedded in *segyehwa*: to "catch up" with the global tide while reviving the essential value of Korean traditional cultures.

The specific goals of *segyehwa* for Korea as determined by President Young-sam Kim in 1994 were: 1) to become a leading nation in the world; 2) to reform irrational social customs and consciousness; 3) to unite all Koreans, north and south; 4) to advance Korea's unique system of values and traditional culture onto the world stage; and 5) to help solve global problems.[29]

Contrary to its motto of "globalization," this official discourse tacitly calls forth a deep-rooted national consciousness and demands the rejustification of Korean history and traditional superiority. It is important to note that *segyehwa*'s goal of rebuilding Korean identity reveals how the discourse itself was meant to operate within a contradictory system of ideas, in which it would pave the way for South Korean citizens to achieve world-class status as citizens of an advanced country and, at the same time, adhere to a nostalgic view of the nation's traditional past. The emphasis placed in *segyehwa* on justifying Korean concepts of national superiority suggests yet another goal, to elicit and maintain a national response:

---

[28] James Oseland, "Heart & Soul," *American Theatre* 15.7 (1998). My italics.

[29] Jeong Duk Yi (Jŏng-dŏk Yi), "Globalization and Recent Changes to Daily Life in the Republic of Korea," *Korea and Globalization* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002): 11.

> […] *segyehwa* must be underpinned by Koreanization. Koreans cannot become global citizens without a good understanding of their own culture and tradition. *Segyehwa* in the proper sense of the word means that Koreans should march out into the world on the strength of their unique culture and traditional values. Only when the national identity is maintained and intrinsic national spirit upheld will Koreans be able to successfully globalize.[30]

This inherent contradiction results from the discourse's desire to both attest Korea's inherent supremacy and to remedy its "inferior weakness" in relation to "advanced others (i.e. the West, or Japan)."

With the emergence of *segyehwa*, popular slogans were created as ideological declarations of the superiority and uniqueness of particular Korean products and culture. *Shinto bulli* ["body and earth are not separable"], for example, means that "because Korean bodies depend on food grown in Korean territory, we should eat only Korean food." According to Gi-wook Shin (Ki-wuk Shin), *Shinto bulli* implies that

> if a person has Korean blood, he or she is Korean, regardless of class background or place of residence, [thus], Koreans remain Korean because they share the same blood [….] Neither globalization nor any other social change can alter this fact [….] The ideology of the term [also] has been transformed into the commercialization of the Korean culture and heritage.

---

[30] Young-sam Kim, *Korea's Reform and Globalization* (Seoul: Korean Overseas Information Service, 1996): 15.

Food, drink, and other everyday commodities that incorporate traditional 'Korean' elements have become popular products in the Korean market.[31] "A unique Korean style can become a unique world-class style" was another popular phrase,[32] one of many that attempted to re-establish Korean identity and pride through emphasizing Korea's need to maintain a unique "Korean-ness." By recycling and exaggerating Korean traditional spirit, this nationalistic discourse created an imaginary world where people were expected to reinvent and reconstruct the significance of Korean history and Korean cultural identity.

It is important to note that this conjunction of identity, refashioning of Korean history, and emphasis on traditional cultural values formed the reverse side of the globalization (*segyehwa*) coin. *Segyehwa* policy aspired to reassert identity as "Korean" and to further the nation-making process (i.e., progress). Progress would be accomplished through encouraging citizens to become self-aware and proud Koreans, which in turn was meant to prompt them to become world-class citizens.

This rhetoric demonstrates how the majority of South Korean citizens conflate nationalism with global success. Precisely through its triumphant image of "national victory," *segyehwa* discourse naturally appealed to the majority of South Koreans. In

---

[31] Gi-wook Shin (Ki-wuk Shin), *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, politics, and legacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006): 216.

[32] In other words, "Because such cultural products are unique in the world, certain Korean traditional cultural elements can become a part of the global cultural heritage" (*Kajang Han'gukjŏgin gŏt e segyejŏgin gŏsida*). See Jeong Duk Yi, "Globalization and Recent Changes to Daily Life in the Republic of Korea," 11.

this context, nationalism has been translated as a spontaneous, pervasive idea. According to Shin, "nationalism might be viewed among Koreans not as a constraint, but rather as a primary mover in promoting a particular approach toward globalization. Most Koreans appear to see no inherent contradiction between nationalism and globalization."[33]

Despite the reformist nature of *segyehwa*, it merely reproduced or even strengthened the rhetoric of conservative family values and traditions. Emphasis on filial piety, for example, which was prominent throughout *segyehwa* discourse, supported the notion of Korea as the vanguard of Confucian culture in East Asia. Similarly, *segyehwa* also kept women bound within traditional gender roles—under the premise that feminine virtue would defend or even buttress South Korea on its way to taking its place among the top-tier nations.

Indeed, *segyehwa* calls for national reform and upward mobility, "rationalizing all aspects of national life, reforms in every area, especially to abolish all outmoded or unreasonable elements."[34] Efficient women, who are competent enough to hold careers and participate in public life, are idealized for the sake of the nation's competitiveness. However, because the policy also fixes the private sector (family, marriage, reproduction) in the domain of tradition, it inevitably locates women within conventional, domestic, familial contexts such as childbearing and childcare, housekeeping, and nurturing activities such as cooking, and exults women's (forced) embodiment of purity and virtue

---

[33] Ibid., 208.

[34] Young-sam Kim, *Korea's Reform and Globalization*, 15.

as a national essence mandated by the patriarchal system. In such a male-centered scenario, a desirable woman should be a "superwoman" who is well educated, affluent, and successful in her career, but who is also a virtuous wife and caring mother in her private life.

These dual objectives explain the extent to which the official discourse of *segyehwa* demands, as a way of securing Korean uniqueness and independence on the global stage, rejustification of the values of Korean traditional superiority, unaffected by encroaching globalization. Such a perspective tends to fix tradition as an eternal good and to promote it as a guarantee for South Korea's development and success: "[Korean] traditions of strong family ties have helped retain a sound basis for social coherence and integration. [Thus] it is important [for South Korea's success in the global league] that the sound traditional emphasis on family values be maintained."[35] By conflating citizens' individual development with national development and placing family values as the essential mediator between the two, this statement reveals how *segyehwa* solidifies the conservative family tradition and also connects it to the goal of national development. According to this logic, a good citizen who supports the nation's global success also upholds the traditional value of family.

With its gendered aspect concealed, *segyehwa*'s triumphant rhetoric of national victory appealed to the majority of South Koreans. Nationalism in this context was not a constraint but rather a voluntary "mover in promoting a particular approach toward

---

[35] Ibid., 18-20.

globalization."[36] However, the prominent idealization of masculinized development, encouraged by supposedly spontaneous demonstrations of nationalism, does not allow us to perceive how *segyehwa* did not favor traditionally disempowered populations, such as women.

Segyehwa was declared at the height of national confidence, supported by the strong economy of the early 1990s. Unfortunately, this confidence turned out to be an overture to the IMF intervention (1997-2000)[37] and its consequent damage to the myth of national development in South Korea. However, after 2000, the remnants of *segyehwa* discourse reasserted itself in South Korean society, where even today its nationalist rhetoric functions as one of the prime movers in citizens' lives.

Embodying the rationale of the *segyehwa* discourse, *The Last Empress* reaches for the global while also turning its gaze toward traditional décor. Thus, the play follows the form of a glamorous Broadway-style musical while exploring "uniquely Korean" subject matter. In addition, it presents an advanced version of a Korean cultural product through an active, sophisticated version of the Queen Min character. The branding of this production as the prime example of successful globalization in South Korea continues to assure its popularity with domestic audiences. It nonetheless contains a central paradox, similar to *segyehwa*, of a futuristic desire to advance onto the global stage while remaining intertwined with the national and adhering to Korean tradition.

---

[36] Gi-wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea*, 208.

[37] Younghan Cho, "The National Crisis and De/Reconstructing Nationalism in South Korea during the IMF Intervention," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 9.1 (2008): 82-96.

Although the image of Queen Min is updated for modern audiences, it also gathers her back into the traditional domain, designating her as its bearer and as the "Mother of the nation." Problematically, such competing perspectives disregard or even manipulate the status of South Korean women and other minorities in the name of national development.

Broadway as a Symbol of the Global and the Workings of Nationalism in South Korea

The Last Empress' New York premiere in 1997, along with A-Com's globalist slogan, indicates a showcase where globalization (i.e. Americanization) taps into the local rhetoric of development, which in South Korea has been ushered in by inherent nationalism. As soon as this musical traveled abroad, it began to enjoy a prominent reputation at home as "the first Korean musical shown on Broadway." In examining the main reasons for the musical's positive reception in South Korea, it is important to notice how the term "Broadway" functions in this context. Broadway in South Korea is conflated with the very notion of the global; the term itself has been understood as a successful, glamorous cultural symbol of America. In addition, Broadway in this context becomes both a desirable model that South Koreans should imitate in order to succeed and also a difficult opponent for them to defeat.

The musical's first trip to Broadway was immediately recognized as a nationwide triumph, and its domestic popularity rose accordingly. Under the rubric of *segyehwa*'s nationalistic discourse, *The Last Empress* was called an "exemplary model" that secured the nation's fame by promoting Korea's exquisite culture through performances on an

international stage. For South Korean theatre critic Yŏng-hae Noh, *The Last Empress* is the "people's [*kukmin*] musical" because it represents the nation and has proven the superior quality of South Korean performance culture as a whole.[38] The musical still holds such a position of primacy in the South Korean context that it continues to be staged almost annually and has reaped numerous domestic theatre awards.[39]

However, South Korean media continually overstate the musical's impact on Broadway by, for example, using the term "Broadway" to misrepresent the play's few nights of special visiting-tour at a New York theatre rather than accurately as an extended-performance, Broadway-run production. Such misrepresentation explains how much even the impression of global success can appeal to domestic readers in South Korea. Mainstream media further deployed the rhetoric of global success by exaggerating *The Last Empress*'s international travels.[40] Early in 1997, when the musical was to premiere in New York City, South Korean mass media ubiquitously highlighted how "this Korean musical" was about to be launched on Broadway: "*The Last Empress*' New York premiere has to be recognized not just as an ordinary

---

[38] Yŏng-hae Noh, "Exploring the 'Kukmin' musicals of the late 1990s South Korea: *The Last Empress* and *Linie 1—Das Musikal*," *Music and Culture* 3.3 (2000): 61-90.

[39] Since *The Last Empress* premiered at the Seoul Performing Arts Center in Korea in 1995, it has attracted over 920,000 people to 694 performances (as of May 2006).

[40] According to A-Com, the musical appeared at Lincoln Center in New York (1997, 1998) and was subsequently presented at the Schubert Theater (1998) and the Kodak Theatre in Los Angeles (2003). The musical's English version was introduced at the Apollo Hammersmith Theatre in London's West End (2002), and at the Hummingbird Centre in Toronto (2004).

international tour event; it has to be seen as 'the first Korean musical's export' on Broadway, the heart of the musical theatre."[41]

In fact, such overstatements reflect the extent to which average domestic audiences conflate the very word "Broadway" with the desire for global visibility and success. Moreover, Korean mainstream media's obsessive endorsement of "Broadway" has been recharged by *segyehwa*'s nationalistic desire for the advanced development of the South Korean cultural industry.

In its entirety, South Korean discourse about the musical's travel to the West describes a showcase wherein masculine developmentalism, disguised as glamorous globalization and national success, appeals to domestic citizens. A-Com's statement of philosophy concisely illustrates how the musical has garnered both official and mainstream support in South Korea via its masculine rhetoric of national development:

> The World shouts "Amazing" to the development of Korean musical market. By our rapid development, we are encouraged to go to the 150 billion markets all around world. Now we need to build our market stronger and to develop the Korean musical's reputation higher in the world. [….] As a leading production, A-Com will go forward to the world to show the power of Korean musical."[42]

---

41 *Tonga Ilbo*, 9 May 1997.

42 A-Com International, n.d., "Greeting," Last Empress the Musical, http://www.iacom.co.kr (accessed 8 September 2007).

Although a lack of guarantees forced it to rely on domestic funding, the company's determination to achieve successful globalization prompted it to take the show to several international venues. However, in New York, most of the audience was Korean or Korean-American, at a ratio of about 9:1 (Koreans vs. non-Koreans).[43] The story of global success in this context is that of an empty signifier, merely functioning as an expression of an unfulfilled desire.

Under the influence of *segyehwa* and the prevalent nationalistic motivation, A-Com gained powerful, if not fully sufficient support from mainstream media outlets; *Chosun Ilbo*, Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), and Samsung Corporation helped underwrite the New York tour. For the London performance, the South Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism funded performance expenses.[44]

4. A Close Look at the Musical

The Return of the Empress, 1895-1995

Beneath the complicity between *The Last Empress* and *segyehwa* lurks a single question: Why did A-Com choose to stage a century-old historical drama about Empress Min's dramatic life and murder? The director states that the production

---

[43] *Hangyŏre sinmun*, 18 August 1997.

[44] The data is based on the musical's program brochures.

initially aimed at rekindling the tragic queen's modern spirit to commemorate the centennial of her death (1995) but also claims, befitting the global/*segyehwa* context, that this was done to revisit mistakes made during Korea's late-nineteenth-century transition into the modern era as well as to rearticulate the empress' significance through a new performance.[45] Indeed, the demand for globalization in the 1990s in South Korea resembles the situation of late-nineteenth-century Chosŏn, which was forced to open up by the great empires. The production's rationale has also taken note of a new trend, marked by attempts to revise the queen's negative reputation in South Korea.

Segyehwa was prompted by the imperative to reestablish Korean identity through learning from the nation's past hardships, exemplified by the total humiliation of just a century ago. During the transitional period of globalization, the South Korean government drew pointed similarities between the two epochs:

> [I]t will be helpful to reflect on recent Korean history, since Korea was confronted with the challenge of similar revolutionary changes at the turn of this century. At that time, Korea's top priority should have been to tear down its ancient regime, end its self-isolation and modernize and industrialize itself. But instead, with only a vague awareness of the need to pursue modernization, Korea reluctantly opened itself to outside influences […] As a result, Korea fell prey to Japan's imperialism […] and was subsequently forced to suffer humiliation and hardship as a

45 A-Com International, n.d., "About *The Last Empress*," Last Empress the Musical, http://www.iacom.co.kr (accessed 25 October 2006).

colony for decades.[46]

Nonetheless, the grand aims of *segyehwa* actually reproduce a local, patriarchal system and are far from improving women's actual status. Similarly, the musical's nationalistic ambitions are meant to override the criticism that it eventually ties its heroine back into a traditional gender role and represents her merely as an allegory of the nation-state.

Despite the production's apparent upholding of Queen Min's forward-looking ideas, her character is largely grounded in a traditional form of gender identification. The queen's expressions of her loneliness in her first solo ("There is a Star in My Heart") at the beginning of the musical reflect the separation of women in the private sphere in the context of traditional Korean culture (Figure 2.1).

Fig 2.1 Queen Min expressing her loneliness in the court in *Musical The Last Empress*. Video still courtesy of *Munhwaga Junggye* [Cultural Reports], Seoul Broadcasting System, Seoul. 25 March 2005.

46 Young-sam Kim, *Korea's Reform and Globalization*, 9.

Moreover, the scene's staging implies that the queen's loneliness is the result of her own deficiency as a woman (shown by her inability to entice her husband, the king) rather than an ordinary consequence of the traditional feudal system:

> To seclusion deep inside the palace.
> Nobody ever looks for me here. And I cannot stand this loneliness.
> What shall I do for my empty heart?
> I now possess the scent of a woman yet you just chase those wild flowers.
> …….
> HEAD COURT LADY KIM: No man will be fascinated, If a woman is only intelligent. Adorn yourself, for strong fragrance will always make heads turn. [1.2.7][47]

An earlier scene in which King Kojong dallies with his concubines ("Soft is the Spring Breeze") has already established the queen's sexual failure and her supposedly unsatisfactory relationships with other women in the court. Such scenic order not only effectively reasserts the patriarchal belief that it is a woman's responsibility to keep her husband faithful, it also promotes the conventional hierarchical system wherein a woman's relationships with other women should be based primarily on competition.

---

47 All of the musical's dialogues and songs quoted here are from the unpublished English translation version of *The Last Empress*, translated by Georgina St. George (2002).

The swift juxtaposition of the queen's poignant solo and the military training scene suggests how the musical conflates a woman's sexual function with the national role of masculinist militarism (Figure 2.2). The scene depicting Queen Min's isolation

Fig 2.2 An all-male military training scene in *Musical The Last Empress*. Video still courtesy of *Munhwaga Junggye* [Cultural Reports], Seoul Broadcasting System, Seoul. 25 Mar 2005.

in the palace gives way to a group of Korean soldiers in training for service at the court. The soldiers' choreography in this all-male scene displays their robust masculinity in a powerful spectacle of high, hefty jumps and kicks set to a loud chorus, a mixture of Broadway-style modern dance and traditional Asian martial arts forms (Figure 2.3):

We are the proud guardians of our nation.

We would not betray we would rather die.

Call us we will serve with everlasting loyalty,

Call us we will fight against all our enemies.

Sang-sa-di-ya! Isn't it great? Hap-hap! [1.2.8]

Fig 2.3 Korean soldiers showing off their patriotic confidence in the military scene. Courtesy of the on-line picture gallery at the official Website of *The Last Empress* [http://www.thelastempress.com].

The sharp contrast created by the men's high-spirited display and the sorrowful queen's failure of femininity demonstrate how the play sets female sexual seduction against masculine military aggression. By equating women's sexual capability with the military's national role, the musical also implies that a nationalistic, military attack could occur as a form of gender/sexual violence.

Next, Queen Min reenters from stage right and sings another song about her failure to provide the King with a son ("A Wish for a Prince"), and consequent inability to fulfill her duty as a wife. The framing of the military training spectacle between the two scenes explicating Queen Min's gender role and sexual duties implies that all women are required to activate the masculine state power through their duty as reproducers. This well-established onstage relationship between the female sexual role and state authority culminates in the violation of the queen's body at the end of the play, when her

murder is conflated with Korea's jeopardized autonomy. Anne McClintock's explication of the gendered aspect of nationalism sheds additional light on this relationship:

> All nations depend on powerful constructions of gender. Despite many nationalists' ideological investment in the idea of popular *unity*, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalization of gender *difference*. No nation in the world gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state.[48]

The queen's mutilated body in the musical is a literal embodiment of the Japanese assault on Korea's national body. For dramatic efficacy, such allegory relies on the anti-Japanese sentiments and consequent nationalism of the domestic Korean audience. The musical accomplishes these objectives by maneuvering and revisualizing the historical atrocity and also by venerating the feminine, particularly in the image of the "Motherland." Likewise, the significance of the Mother as "good woman" is the very picture of collective virtue.

Yet, eventually "Motherland" is affirmed in *The Last Empress* as a feminine term for nationhood, albeit women are not actually present in this nation but rather lurk behind the maternal image invoked on their behalf through the modern process of re-masculinization and the expressed desire for national development. In this musical, the

---

[48] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 353. Italics in the original.

idealized maternal merely accommodates and nurtures the projection of a masculine version of maternity, or "patriarchy in drag."[49]

The Empress as the Mother of the Nation

Although the musical aspires to present a reformed version of Korean traditional culture, the sexual relationships it depicts are stable and operate according to the normative functions of gender. These norms rely on the gender differences mandated by tradition and a fixation on such traditional characteristics.

In an effort to reclaim the significance of Queen Min, she is portrayed as a harbinger of globalization—a characterization derived from historical reality; the queen was in fact an active agent for Chosŏn's modernization and even Westernization. Redeeming her status as a national icon is meant to subvert her historically degraded position and designate her the "Mother of Korea" who willingly sacrificed herself on behalf of her people. Throughout the performance, she and the other characters constantly refer to her as "The Mother of all people of this nation" (1.1.3). However, notwithstanding its rehabilitating intent, this refashioning can also be interpreted as another attempt to use the empress as a tool to promote nationalistic ideology.

---

[49] Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War*" (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997): 77.

The loyalty bestowed upon the queen within the performance structure is only present because she is the symbol of a dying nation. This conditionality undermines the character's feminine agency and reduces it to a form of depersonalized motherhood. Other production elements more blatantly confine Queen Min within a strict allegorical framework. For example, she can be understood only as a mother figure to the national collective because the musical binds her so strongly in a familial role. Similarly, the performance represents Queen Min only as an ideal/symbolic "torch," healing the wounded nation and guiding it toward a brighter future. All of these characterizations of Queen Min disallow individual agency or expression and prohibit her presence onstage from transcending its allegorical function.

The most stark example of this nationalized maternity is produced by its juxtaposition with another archetypical feminized role, that of the beloved, in an apparent love scene wherein the queen's figure is literally reshaped into "Motherland in danger." This scene features the character of General Gye-hun Hong,[50] dramatized as a faithful admirer secretly in love with the queen. To enhance the melodramatic mood, General Hong's character is given a solo aria, "You Are My Destiny." However, both its melody and lyrics are a considerable departure from the typical ballad or love song usually found in musical theatre. Instead, the song's solemn language reads as though it is being sung to the Motherland Chosŏn, not to the Queen as an individual woman:

> Now that you ask, I shall answer.
>
> While young at heart, wandering all over the place,

50 Hong Gye-hun served as the Chief of the Royal Guard during the queen's reign.

I caught a glimpse of you in your hometown.
Ever since that day, you have been my destiny.
Let this be the last night of this world,
I shall die protecting you and the throne.
Oh! May Heaven help me!
Allow me to die for the one I love! [2.11.19]

This is General Hong's only confession of love to the queen. As such, its lyrics portray her as a symbol of the throne and thereby transform Hong's affection into patriotic worship as he passionately states his wish to die for his loving country. Against the solo's emphasis on Hong's faith and the tragic beauty of his loyal character, his individual affection for the queen becomes utterly insignificant.

The blocking of this scene illustrates lyrics quoted above. As General Hong's testimonial ballad unfolds, the lighting gradually erases Queen Min's presence whereas his masculine gestures (for example, singing while clasping his sheath, in itself a rather obvious symbol of thwarted virility) are constant reminders of his importance as a warrior and protector of the land. At the same time, Queen Min slowly moves away from center stage to a darkened rear-stage area. As a result, the figure of Queen Min fades from sight as General Hong controls the center stage. Hong's manly composure as shown through this blocking refers to traditional constructions of both the national sphere and gender, wherein women are excluded from public discourse around nation-building and nationalisms. His active gestures demonstrate the convention wherein

"[t]he national duties of the boys were to live and die for the nation; girls did not need to act—they had to become the national embodiment."[51]

The musical binds the queen within traditional, familial (inner) duty, which clearly differentiates the private domain from the public zone. But it can also combine them, as when Taewonkun publicly denounces Queen Min because she is unable to produce a future king for the nation (and a grandson for himself). Inevitably, Taewonkun uses the queen's "defect" as a pretext to disempower her politically and remove her from the public domain. In "A Wish for a Prince," Taewonkun sings furiously, "You [Queen Min] do not even have the ability to fulfill a woman's duty, yet, dare to tamper with the politics and the Royal affairs? Disrespectful! Insolent!"[52]

The musical legitimizes the queen's actions primarily within a familial domain: her character persistently resorts to the notion of reproduction and is designated the "Mother," a source of national regeneration. This duty becomes an essential condition from which Queen Min is reinvented as a regenerative spirit that brings eternal life to the nation's future.

Shamanic Rite as a Cultural Difference

---

51 Nira Yuval-Davis, "Nationalism, Feminism and Gender Relations," *Understanding Nationalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001): 127.

52 From *The Last Empress*, compact disc, ℗and©2002 A-Com International Co., Ltd.

As the production reestablishes Queen Min's character in terms of a traditional gender role, she is represented as the bearer of distinctive Korean culture via the shamanic rite scene. Given the director's goal of injecting a uniquely Korean spirit into a Western format, the audience is left with many questions, especially regarding the connections between nationalism and gender dynamics. The play's action raises concerns as to whether a nationalist ideal of cultural development should rely upon manipulating native women into bearing the national burden. Indeed, its imagery and treatment of such manipulation may even contribute to creating yet another stereotypical "Dragon Lady."

The play's representation of shamanic ritual stands at the nexus of traditional/modern and native folklore/global culture, an intricate location that partly results from the producer's re-appropriation of a once-abandoned, presumably primitive, always -exotic occult practice as a way to secure respectability for Korean culture in the global arena. Since the beginning of Korea's modernization, Korean elites have been condemning Korean shamanism as a sign of the nation's backwardness and inferiority. Under the premise of enlightenment and civilization, shamanic rituals were said to be something Koreans should eradicate. However, Yun reinvents shamanic ritual as representative Korean culture for the world audience. In fact, the rationale behind the staging of the shamanic rite corresponds to the ways the South Korean government has treated the genre of *gut*.

Because *gut*, a Korean shamanic ritual that originally belonged to low-brow folklore, was enacted mostly by lower-class females, Korean shamans and their practices—notwithstanding their popularity—were largely seen as marginal. Although

shamans and shamanic practices were nearly extinguished as the country began to modernize, during the 1960s and 1970s the South Korean military government preserved several forms of *gut* and other shamanic rituals through the establishment of the Cultural Heritage Protection Act and the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage. According to these policies, which are still active, the government controls *gut* under conditions set by the Cultural Preservation Law. Thus a culturalist image was created out of an indigenous folk practice—one that the government could promote as national heritage.

Similarly, under the label of national culture, the shamanic rite is reproduced in *The Last Empress* as a spectacular commodity separate from the field of organic folklore. The musical emblematizes its shamanic ritual as a primitive, traditionally Korean form of ritual, thereby attempting to mark it as a facet of essential, unique Korean-ness within the framework of a Western-style musical. In this way, the musical reproduces the shamanic rite as a vague nostalgic product for its domestic audiences. By Western audiences, however, the shamanic ritual is accepted as a prestigious form of native culture.

The shamanic rite scene was included at the New York premiere in 1997, the production's first performance in a Western theatrical venue. For this reason, the producer intended to feature the scene (actually a *sut'aegut*, a shamanic ritual for women's conception), as an example of authentic Korean folk-art performance. The notion of authenticity in this context becomes problematic because it assumes an essential, stagnant, unitary composition of national culture and identity. According to Yun,

> We conceived *The Last Empress* as a way of refashioning a part of "our culture" and promoting it in the world market. From now on, it is crucial for one to repackage their own national culture, provoking financial interest in the global market. This is our way to build a "cultural nation" [*munhwa guk-ka*] in order to fully arrive at a "world-class society." Otherwise, we will remain as a country that is "culturally subordinated." To refashion and generate a creative art work that can compete in the top tier of the global cultural economy, [with *The Last Empress*] we injected "a unique Korean spirit" within a "Western" framework called the "musical."[53]

By drawing upon the "unique characteristics" of "our culture" and the consequent effects of Korean-ness, Yun employs traditional state rhetoric that sets up a masculine competition against the (West's) encroaching wave of emasculating globalization. He then directly appeals to "our national culture" and "a unique Korean spirit" as he tries to differentiate the special interiority of a national form.

According to the cultural implications of Yun's interpretation, women are "required to carry this 'burden of representation,' as they are constructed as the symbolic bearers of the collectivity's identity and honor, both personally and collectively."[54] Following this myth of "women as the symbolic bearer of a national culture," the

---

[53] Ho-jin Yun, "*Myŏngsŏng Hwanghoo ŭi Brodŭwaei jinch'ulgwa sŏnggwa*" [Staging The Last Empress on Broadway], Lecture, Kukmin University, Seoul, Korea, 12 November 1998.

[54] Yuval-Davis, "Nationalism, Feminism and Gender Relations," 127.

performance taps into the inherent belief that women can strongly represent the spiritual inner domain of Korean culture as it competes against global forces.

Partha Chatterjee's explanation of how nationalist discourse manipulates the issue of femininity is relevant in this context as well. He writes, "[N]ationalist constructions of woman…show how, in the confrontation between colonialist and nationalist discourses, the dichotomies of spiritual/material, home/world, feminine/masculine, while enabling the production of a nationalist discourse which is different from that of colonialism, nonetheless remain trapped within its framework of false essentialisms."[55] This quotation illuminates Queen Min's entrapment between the concepts enumerated by Yun of "Global market or Western framework" and the "desire for a cultural nation," which are comparable to Chatterjee's dichotomies between "colonialist" and "nationalist" discourses. Thus the inclusion of the shamanic rite not only draws upon "our unique culture" and Korean-ness, but also cements conservative representations of gender through harnessing Queen Min primarily as a national reproductive agent. In doing so, the scene repeats or even reinforces the dichotomy between men and women in the name of national difference, as a way of securing the global market.

The shamanic rite scene both tries to prove the power of spirituality and makes visible an intangible aspect of Korean culture. The ways in which the ritual has been adapted and stylized, which are on one level merely attempts to fit it into the framework of a Western musical, also figuratively demonstrate the kind of global cultural commodity the director is pursuing. The lighting effects, which create an "Asiatic"

---

[55] Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 134.

mood via innumerable images of floating lanterns against a bright red background, fuse the shamanic ritual with Western musical style.

The director's decision to stage such an extremely gendered setting, in which the childless Queen Min seeks ritual aid for her sincere, pitiful wish to conceive a son,[56] shows how the producer abruptly fuses the spiritual and feminine domains. For Western audiences, the exotic adaptation of the shamanic ritual offers another, stereotypical, Asian Dragon Lady.

SHAMAN: Plead to Grandma Samshin!
Only she can clean up this mess!
Only she can bring Your Highness a son!
And a fortunate shrine-keeper will place
The Prince on Her Highness' lap!
Listen! Can you hear the baby crying?
He will preserve the Throne,
For the thousand years to come.
And the nation's future is in the hands
Of the lady with manly spirit! [1.2.10]

As the shaman elaborates her incantations and ritual dance, the queen actively participates in the ceremony, poignantly stating her wish for a prince. In this *gut*, the

56 The majority of shamans in Korea are females who are called *mudang*; the *mudang* in this musical is named Jinryŏnggun. Primarily, Korean shamanism is considered a female practice. It is told that Queen Min actually had a female shaman brought to the court in order to help her conceive an heir to the throne. See Lee Haekyoung (2002).

mudang exhorts both client and audience to experience an ecstatic trance. The scene strongly emphasizes flamboyant audiovisual effects, including music that helps the *mudang* and her assistant dancers escape the ordinary and transcend theatrical limits. The *mudang* is meant to be a liminal figure, carrying the queen to meet the spirits through the ecstasy she creates as a crucial part of the entire performance, dancing faster and faster with a fan and bells in her hands while the tempo and rhythm accelerate (Figure 2.4). As the ritual figuratively transforms the queen into a generative source, her character becomes a device that renews the tainted state of the nation.

Fig 2.4 Jinryŏnggun praying for the queen's conception. Courtesy of the on-line picture gallery at the official Website of *The Last Empress* [http://www.thelastempress.com].

This visualization of national essence via Asian female characters leads to the creation of another stereotype of Asian mysticism on behalf of Western spectatorship. To quote Sue-Ellen Case, who saw the Los Angeles performance in 2003 at the Kodak Theatre, most Western viewers—including herself—read the shaman's image as "a dark

powerful character […] and something threatening" and were swayed by the female shaman's performance of "primitive magic."[57] As the scene plants the queen's character in the realm of mysticism via the menacing power of shamanic ritual, the scene effectively changes the queen into a type of "Asian Dragon Lady." Case also claims that the image of the last empress in the musical cannot but persuasively associate the character with the Dragon Lady stereotypes in classic Asian-American cultural venues. For Case, the character of Queen Min "suggests a powerful but sinister 'Asian' woman, whose strength resides in her clandestine connections and strategies. She is generally seductive, powerful and lethal. She represents the seductive danger of the opulent imperial heritage of the East in the form of an 'oriental' villainess."[58]

Yun's commitment to produce a uniquely Korean musical clearly demonstrates a "mechanism for selecting, defining and controlling a [Korean] identity" that is meant to ensure the competitiveness of South Korean cultural products amidst the forces of globalization (Devan, 1997).[59] However, such an obsession with Korean difference runs the risk of manipulating and essentializing Korean women and their female culture. The display of the shamanic rite in the musical is an example of a local (i.e., male and elitist) cultural producer, supported by corporate capital and government, naturalizing a

---

[57] Sue-Ellen Case, "Musical *The Last Empress*: A Korean Staging of Woman and Nation," *Australasian Drama Studies* 49 (2006): 17.

[58] Ibid., 16-17.

[59] Janadas Devan, "Strange Bedfellows: Lee Kuan Yew and Samuel Huntington," unpublished essay (1997), quoted in Lee Wang Choy, "Authenticity, Reflexivity, and Spectacle; or, The Rise of New Asia is Not the End of the World," *positions* 12.3 (2004): 643-666.

masculine ideology of cultural/economic development in the name of successful globalization and the nation's upward mobilization.

Visuality, Spectatorship, and the Desire for Successful Globalization

The performance's visual effect, exemplified by lavish décor and "authentic" touches such as the shamanic rite scene, gives tangible shape to the desire for globalization harbored by its South Korean spectatorship. As a means of reinventing the particularity of Korean traditional culture, *mudang* and *gut* have been refashioned to make them compatible with the process of globalization. Along the way, indigenous, once-common cultural devices become cloaked within the glamour of a Broadway-style musical and the array of refashioned Korean-ness in the performance, "familiarly exotic" to its home audience, conflates with the play's embellished label of "the first Korean musical on Broadway."

In this context, the lavish onstage décor and the exquisite shamanic dance can only be stand-ins, fetish objects. The show's frequent displays of finely choreographed dancing, grandiose sets, and extravagant costumes barely compensate for the experienced/imagined emasculation of Chosŏn within the dramatic narrative. Yet, both the fetish objects and their visuality are intended to ameliorate Chosŏn's deprivation and humiliation, which are innately perceived by domestic audiences. Apart from the tragic narrative, the performance's visual effect reminds Korean spectators of the forgotten beauty of their national culture; in addition, these audiences are prompted to feel as if

these uniquely Korean aesthetics, glamorously refashioned, are in themselves inexorable, national qualities that will advance their country onto the world stage.

Domestic newspapers have insisted that the musical is a "global success" since its first New York tour. This inflated news has further activated the desire of average South Koreans for global advancement, and its celebratory tone has encouraged domestic audiences to perceive "The Last Empress" as something auspicious. However, it is clear that the producers, the South Korean media, and the domestic reviewers have overstated the international theatre reviews in order to validate and promote the musical's global success. *Chosun Ilbo*, a mainstream South Korean newspaper, states that

> The Western spectators gaped with amazement at the Shaman Rite scene. The fantastic scenic arrangement appealed to the Westerners for its exotic features. The shamanic scene was greatly acknowledged as a model of a successful translation—presenting a Korean traditional cultural form via a modern musical.[60]

This obsessively endorsed notion of the musical's "international success" is either an empty signifier or, at best, empty rhetoric typical of the nation-state's drive to achieve a masculine developmental mobilization. The producers must have imagined their visualization of a bygone era and lavish staging of Korea's native culture as crucial for the play's entrance onto the global stage. However, the New York reviews mostly dwell upon the show's extravagant visual quality, a focus on the show's exteriority that reveals the degree to which the show promotes Orientalism—in itself perceived by Westerners as

---

[60] *Chosun Ilbo*, 18 August 1997.

primarily a visual phenomenon. For example, *New York Times* reviewer Anita Gates writes:

> For English-speaking audiences, a little more than two-and-a-half hours is a long time to struggle with supertitles [...] The lighting (often like gold streaming down from heaven), the sets (from the palace to the arriving Americans' stylized sailing ships) and the costumes (sumptuous fabrics, rich colors) remind theatergoers how satisfying real splendor can be.[61]

The production's overt endorsement of exoticism might have elicited a sense of guilt from British viewers, especially the elites. However, Michael Billington of the *Guardian* harshly criticizes the production he saw in London, in 2002:

> Undeniably the production by Ho-jin Yun, with its 600 costumes, is an eyeful: we get twin revolving stages, martial arts exercises under a banner of dragons, diplomatic and trade emissaries on stilts, royal French lessons under a parasol. But although the director marshals his forces with some skill, the production smacks of internationalized kitsch.[62]

It is possible that Billington, while evaluating this display of the Other's culture, was also aware that the culture itself is deemed "exotic," and might thus have overreacted to the performance on the basis that it was not politically correct.[63]

---

61 *New York Times*, 21 August 1997.

62 *Guardian*, 5 February 2002.

63 I personally thank Dr. Hyaeweol Choi (Hye-wŏl Ch'oe) for her comments regarding this particular issue.

In *The Last Empress*, lavish costumes and set designs, along with the shamanic rite scene newly inserted for the New York premiere, have been materialized and made visible as fetish objects through collective obsession with the global and the success implied by the term. The refashioned *gut* in particular, conceived as a model example of authentic Korean-ness, convinces domestic viewers that the play is determined to achieve recognition on the global stage. The fetishization of distinctive Korean culture in the performance can be construed as the reification of globalization ideology and the consequent objectification of desire.

5. Conclusion: Performing the Queen's Death

The musical's epilogue, "Rise, People of Chosŏn," features the ghost of Queen Min just after her brutal assassination. Indeed, the play's entire finale functions as a ritual of resurrection as the spectral image of the queen crosses its theatrical boundary to become resituated as a visual of the nationalistic ambition for undying power and longevity. I further suggest that the scene's ghosting of Queen Min is a visual representation of invented national fantasy and desire, and that the dramatic spectacle is ultimately a mobilizing tool in a broader social context.

In this song, the spirit of Queen Min encourages her people to awaken and rise for their destroyed country. Viciously murdered by Japanese assassins in the previous scene ("Find the Queen, Kill the Fox"), her ghost stands as a condensed image of the national wound (colonization). She is dressed in white with her hair undone, embodying the notions of innocence, purity, and sacrifice. The whiteness also functions

as a synecdoche representing the nation itself; the people of Korea are traditionally known as "the ones who dress in white" [*paekŭi minjok*]. In this song, the spirit of the queen surrounded by her people recalls the nation's traumatic past:

PEOPLE: Graceful land and fertile field were raped,
And our dear Queen has left in our grief.
The humiliation brought by wicked Japan,
Will they ever vanish from our minds?

QUEEN: [….] If only death awaits in the end.
Would I ever care if I turn to ashes?
If only I can protect the nation.
Rise, People of Chosun, rise!
Rise, People of Chosun, rise!
This land is for twenty million people,
And for generations to come.

TOGETHER: One step ahead, autonomy and prosperity!
One step back, subordination and retrogression!
Gather our strength in wisdom and courage,
Rise against the shame of ruining our nation!
We shall forever protect the sun rising in the east.
Chosun is forever! Chosun shall prosper! (Reprise)

[Epilogue]

The lyrics literally unite Queen Min with national territory that has been raped by the "wicked" Japanese invaders—just as the queen's body has been violated by them. The

scene molds the figure of Queen Min into an icon of a martyr and at the same time into an embodiment of the conquered nation's shame and guilt. As constructed throughout the play, the role of the empress is a designated one; her importance is based upon the label "Mother of the Nation" and her status as the spiritual symbol of national pride. Therefore, the queen's brutally murdered body conflates with the violation of Korea's national body and honor. The sight of the nation's mother being brutally murdered, and the nation's consequent fall, implicitly demand a nationalistic response from domestic audiences. The musical bids the audience to idolize the queen, but as a woman who was sacrificed by murder rather than as a monarch who actively took part in the nation's history.

This scene transcends the limits of theatricality and crystallizes as an effective cultural representation of South Korean society. The real Empress Min, trapped between the national and the colonial, is caught between competing ideologies on yet another stage. Because of the dubious transposition wrought by this characterization, the performance becomes a problematic crossroads where global influence and nationalism are not only structured within the relations of competitive dominance but also function in complicity.

The empress' presence during the finale evokes and accommodates South Korean audiences' anxiety and desire to be a world-class nation. The spectacle of her wounded, martyred self is meant to call for national solidarity. By repeatedly reassuring her people (and the contemporary domestic audience) that they have overcome the traumatic past, the ghost of the nation's mother guides them to the present/future where they can dream of immortality as they long for and fantasize about a unified nation. At the same

time, the mutilation of the queen is used as psychological release through which Korean audiences purge the fear and guilt they bear from collective historical memory.

Since the musical's premiere, the ghost of the empress has been reshaped and maneuvered in South Korea via popular media such as TV drama, music video, and film. Her popularity as a visual icon may result from her appeal to public fantasy and desire, combined with the sense of identity it imparts. However, as popular media recycle or even enact fantasy versions of the historical trauma and inflict them upon the queen for commercial appeal, her ghost remains undead, experiencing and re-experiencing various forms and styles of death, constantly disappearing in order to reenter the scene. South Korean cultural producers both encourage viewers to identify with the queen's trauma and facilitate their faith in "uniquely Korean sentiment"—this Korean sentiment which is supposedly derived from the creators' admiration of her bravery, her will for modernization, and her sacrifice as the "Mother of the Nation." For most South Koreans, Queen Min remains "Our Last Empress," but must at the same time remain the outsider, hovering in the margins of society.

Chapter 3. Touring *Nanta* [*Cookin'*]: Mediating the National-Regional-Global Triad via a Nonverbal Performance

1. Introduction

By examining *Nanta* (1997)[64], the first South Korean nonverbal performance, this chapter suggests that the nonverbalness of this product and its use of food without language functions both as a tool for constructing and revealing inviting qualities of Korean culture and as the crucial part of the producer's pragmatic global and regional promotional strategies. *Nanta*'s nonverbal aspect and gastronomic theme not only allowed it to profit on Broadway but also attracted Asian tourists in Seoul to its performances there, because of its branding as the Broadway-run show, and bolstered the nation's cultural tourism industry. Accordingly, *Nanta*'s nonverbalness and its presentation of the inviting qualities of Korean culture in the context of other Asian cultures reflect ideas of pan-Asianism (especially considering the Asian spectators visiting Seoul) that were lacking in the production of *The Last Empress*.

---

[64] The producers of *Nanta* used the English title *Cookin'* for their international debut at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1999. From then on, the English title was used when the show was performed for Western audiences and the original title was used when staging the show in South Korea or any other non-Anglophone countries. I use the Korean title, *Nanta,* because my discussion of the production is not limited to the ones performed in the West.

Translated as "to strike recklessly," *Nanta* has not only been praised as the longest-running entertainment show in South Korean theatre history, it is the first South Korean performance to be performed in its own residential theatre (at the heart of Seoul, since 2000). Based on its local popularity, *Nanta* became a successful cultural export, debuting at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1999 and Off-Broadway in 2003 (running until 2005). Quite unlike the way Ho-jin Yun obsessively reached for the global (for example, with his over endorsement of "Broadway") despite great financial problems, Sŭng-hwan Song, a famous South Korean actor-producer, was successful in both domestic and foreign markets with *Nanta*, helped by the play's label as the first South Korean nonverbal performance.

Constituted as the main staging mode and theme, *Nanta*'s nonverbalness and its use of food formed the core of Song's marketing and promotional strategies. Proudly stating his explanation for *Nanta*'s international success, Song notes: "[*Nanta*'s global success] resides in its nonverbal quality. Foreign audiences, especially the audiences from the U.S. or Europe, do not favor reading subtitles when they are in theatres."[65] Concurrently, the same nonverbal quality that allows *Nanta* to build ties with foreign spectators (Asian tourists in particular), also expresses South Korea's national desire to be at the center of Asia. Indeed, *Nanta*'s nonverbal aspect signifies a complex, ambivalent set of desires: it expresses the producer's identification of "Broadway" as his goal of global success (or his desire to be equal to or even part of the "West"), while

65 *Tonga Ilbo*, 04 February 2006.

the play's nonverbal-ness also reveals its attempts to communicate within Asian regional contexts.

While the South Korean reception of the production and the global marketing of *Nanta* have predominantly focused upon its successful entrance on Broadway, they have also emphasized the emergence of spectators from other Asian countries and the production's connection with them since the beginning of the new millennium. In this regard, the presence and significance of the Asian region as a whole audience have begun to be considered in conversations about the role of global-national interplay in South Korean society. Because the idea of pan-Asianism or pan-Asian interest was insignificant in, or absent from, earlier commentaries on the production of *The Last Empress* and the related issues of South Korea's cultural globalization, *Nanta* and its transnational movement well illustrate the changing terms of South Korea's discourse on globalization.

In order to illustrate how the nonverbalness and inviting qualities of Korean culture in *Nanta* are connected with ideas of pan-Asianism, I conduct a content analysis of the performance itself and also analyze domestic news reports from 1998 to the present about the production in the context of the active development of a cultural industry in South Korea. This analysis is based upon an assessment of newspaper reports using the keyword "Nanta" during the years 1997-2007 from <www.kinds.or.kr>, which archives major South Korean newspaper and magazine articles. For the performance analysis, I mainly focused on photographs from the live performance in combination with archival materials such as program notes, the producer's autobiographical narratives on the makings of *Nanta*, and poster ads that document the performance's production and

reception. My own experience as a spectator of *Nanta* in Seoul in 2002 and 2005 influences my account of how the performance accommodates audiences and their live participation.

2. South Korea's Cultural Industry in the New Millennium and the Makings of *Nanta*

Nanta: The First-Korean Nonverbal Performance

Nanta was initially conceived, under the influence of rapid cultural globalization in the late 1990s, to be a successful international cultural product. Its plot is simple: four chefs named "Head Chef," "Sexy Guy," "Female," and "Nephew" create a performance via kitchen utensils such as knives, cutting boards, and pots and pans, making noise and music based on *samulnori* (a traditional Korean performance ritual). These chefs have an hour to cook all the dishes for a wedding banquet and their "Manager" is keeping a close watch on the time and their work. The performance relies strongly on audience participation and real food is used throughout.

As the first Korean-brand nonverbal performance, the show has been successful in both domestic and global markets, attracting local and foreign audiences since its premiere in October 1997 at Ho-Am Art Hall in Seoul. Its status as the longest-running entertainment show in Korean theatre history enabled Song (the CEO of PMC, a

production company, as well as the show's producer) to open the "Nanta Theatre," a dedicated venue in Seoul for the show that is also the "first standing performing-art theatre in South Korea."[66]

Song, long known as a TV-drama/theatre actor in South Korea, began his career as a child actor in 1965. The longevity of his career gave him ample reason to criticize the conditions faced by theatre companies in South Korea, such as insufficient budgets and profits. Song's responsiveness to such financial issues as well as his desire to create a successful business model for the performing arts prompted him to adopt a corporate system at PMC and also to widen the audience pool for Korean theatre by expanding the limited domestic market overseas.[67]

Due to his efforts, *Nanta* became a successful export product. It received a best-performance award at its international debut, in 1999 at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival where it was presented under its English title, *Cookin'*[68] , was selected as the opening show at Broadway's New Victory Theatre for both the 2003 and 2004 seasons, and was performed at the off-Broadway Minetta Lane Theatre from spring 2004 to spring 2005.[69]

---

[66] PMC, n.d., "History," Nonverbal Performance Nanta, http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr/en/nanta/intro_history.asp (accessed 21 December 2007).

[67] Sŭng-hwan Song, *A Man Who Smacked the World: Sŭng-hwan Song, the Culture CEO* (*Segyerŭl nantahan namja: munhwa CEO, Song, Sŭng-hwan*) (Seoul: Bookian, 2003).

[68] PMC, n.d., "Introduction," Nonverbal Performance Nanta, http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr/en/nanta/intro_synopsis.asp (accessed 21 December 2007).

[69] PMC, n.d., "History," Nonverbal Performance Nanta, http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr/en/nanta/intro_history.asp (accessed 21 December 2007).

These successes in Edinburgh and in New York City increased *Nanta*'s attractiveness to audiences in Asian countries, for tourists generally but especially for Taiwanese and Japanese tourists in Seoul mainly because of its aura as the Broadway-run product and *Nanta*'s brand as the sophisticated, Korean version of *Stomp*.

For Korean audiences, the performance's allure relies upon the recognition of how familiar and even banal traditional elements such as *samulnori* can be refashioned as stylish, inspiring global culture; indeed, the embellished brand of *Nanta* [*Cookin'*] is known as "the first contemporary Korean (or Asian) entertainment product successfully exported world-wide."[70] Unlike the ornate period drama *The Last Empress*, an original Korean theatre production that has garnered a similar label, the image of globalized traditional culture in *Nanta* has been constructed via the use of everyday home appliances such as frying pans, knives, cutting boards, and plastic water containers.

Perhaps because of its familiar, inviting setting, *Nanta* has been praised in South Korea for its global marketability in the area of cultural industry.[71] In contrast to *The Last Empress*, which attracted worldwide attention but made little money, *Nanta* is prized as the first Korean contemporary performance that is indisputably profitable on an international scale. This label is due not only to its popularity abroad but also to its successful marketing to the East Asian tourists that have visited South Korea in increasing numbers since 2000 (the year that the "Nanta Theatre" opened in Seoul). That same year, *Nanta* was given a "Korea Tourist Award," nominated as one of the

---

[70] *Munhwa Ilbo*, 20 July 2005.

"Top 10 Shows in Korea" by the Korea Tourism Organization, and praised as the "Best-Selling Show in Korea" by Korea Culture & Arts Foundation.[72] Interestingly, as with *The Last Empress*, at its early stages the production of *Nanta* was also undertaken under a *segyehwa* motto that proclaimed the superiority of uniquely Korean culture: "The most Korean can also be the most international."[73]

I situate *Nanta* within South Korean society as it experienced a transition during the aftermath of *segyehwa*, which was followed by the IMF intervention (1997-2000), and hope through this discussion to illuminate the government's active involvement in the cultural tourism industry and its marketing of that industry from 1998 through the early 2000s. The kinds of images and the sense of cultural intimacy resulting from the East Asian intra-regional communications embodied and projected in *Nanta* show that this performance strategically functions in tandem with the cultural flow and remarkable reputation of Korean popular cultural products throughout Asia.

Cultural Geography of Asia

---

[71] As for *The Last Empress*, the production almost entirely depended on domestic sponsorships (including governmental support) when staged in New York and London.

[72] PMC, n.d., "History," Nonverbal Performance Nanta, http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr/en/nanta/intro_history.asp (accessed 21 December 2007).

[73] PMC, n.d., "Production Note," Nonverbal Performance Nanta, http://nanta.i-mc.co.kr/en/nanta/intro_pnote.asp (accessed 21 December 2007).

My analysis of *Nanta* takes place within the context of East Asian cultural geography, a concept whose visibility has notably increased in South Korean national discourses. Beginning in the late 1990s, South Korean social discourse has not only expressed domestic desires but also emphasized the importance of connecting with neighboring Asian countries. Of course, these issues have been significant within the rise of Korea's export of its popular culture into East and South East Asia and vis-à-vis the remarkable popularity of these products in these regions (a.k.a. "the Korean Wave").

South Korean governmental support for the cultural industry was activated during the administration of Dae-jung Kim (1998-2003) when, as "President of Culture," Kim established Cultural Industry Promotion on 8 February 1999 by allocating $148.5 million to the project.[74] During his administration, the cultural sector's budget relative to the total government budget per fiscal year increased from 484.8 billion won (0.60%) in 1998 to 1.281.5 billion won in 2002 (1.15%).[75] During this time period, South Korea saw the rise and immense popularity of Korean popular cultural products such as films, TV dramas, and pop music in South and East Asian countries like Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, and Vietnam.

---

[74] Won-dam Paek, *East Asia's Choice, the Korean Wave* (*Tongasia ŭi munhwa sŏnt'aek, hallyu*) (Seoul: Pentagram, 2005).

[75] Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Press Release, 25 September 2003 (Seoul: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2003). "Won" is the basic unit of currency in South Korea, with $1 roughly valued at 800 won before the financial crisis in 1997. It has been about 1,190 won to the dollar since mid-1998. Quoted in Doobo Shim (Du-bo Shim), "Hybridity and the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia," *Media, Culture & Society*, 28.1 (2006): 35.

Until the early 1990s, the government as well as the overall discourses focused on the development of heavy industries such as automotive and shipping, or light but equally crucial industries such as semiconductors; however, government also began promoting cultural production as a national strategic industry by noting that "overall revenue from the Hollywood blockbuster, *Jurassic Park*, is worth the foreign sales of 1.5 million Hyundai cars"—an observation compelling enough to awaken the Korean public to the idea of culture as an important industry.[76]

Development of the cultural industry was seen as a new way for South Korea to recuperate from the severe economic downturns that resulted from the IMF intervention. Accordingly, the president announced that "the twenty-first century is the century of culture" and noted that "culture industry is a scale that measures national development."[77] As the government's interest in the industry increased, it declared a "Five-Year Plan for the Development of Korean Film Industry" on 30 March 2000 and established the Korea Content Export Information System in 2001.

Because both the South Korean government and the domestic conversations identified the South and East Asian regions as the most important foreign markets for consumption of South Korean popular culture, South Korea's connections to and interactions with the rest of Asia came to be prevalent in domestic discourses about both the Korean Wave and the cultural industry in general. Simultaneously, however, cultural nationalism was also prominently expressed in most of the major domestic news

---

[76] Shim, 32.

[77] Paek, *East Asia's Choice*, 204.

magazines.[78] Curiously, even as its importance is acknowledged, the cultural geography of Asia is often described as a stepping-stone or a trial, a strategic middle ground to be used by Korean cultural producers on their way to advancement into the U.S. (symbolized by the terms "Hollywood," "Broadway," or "the global"). Thus, the hierarchical order of "national"→"Asia"→"global" was seen as a strategic scheme:

> In order to "invade" Asia, we should definitely make a good effort in the Asian cultural market; but we could more efficiently achieve this by launching into the U.S. market, the origin of popular culture. Look at Ang Lee or Chow, Yun-Fat—they easily earned their fame in Asia after venturing into Hollywood; their names have been globalized beyond Asia after their success in the U.S.[79]

Such discourses reveal the ways in which the very concept of the global and its associated paradigms within South Korea have moved beyond a simple dichotomy between "the U.S." (symbolized in this context as "Broadway") and "the national."

---

[78] I consulted three special issues on the Korean Wave: *Newsmaker*, a newsmagazine of *Kyŏnghyang Newspaper* (16 May 2006); *Sisa Journal* (10 January 2006); and *Jungang* Monthly, a newsmagazine of *Jungang Newspaper* (January 2006; this one discussed the Korean Wave in the context cultural industry development).

[79] "Who is beyond the Korean Wave?" *Newsmaker*, 16 May 2006.

By contrast, recent academic publications[80] about South Korea's cultural industry emphasize that the Korean Wave should not objectify South and East Asia as cultural markets but should instead navigate ways to develop new venues within these regions for cultural co-productions, interactions, and cultural exchanges—as a way of constructing and shaping an alternative regional field of culture and its consumption that might counteract the Western (or American) cultural hegemony, such as the Hollywood or the Broadway.[81]

Apparently, the concept of pan-Asianism in the context of Korean cultural flows emphasizes both the importance of developing cultural commonality among different Asian countries as well as the need to preserve the distinctions between these cultures. The idea of Asian solidarity here also seems to highlight the necessity of creating a new Asian cultural identity. However, such rhetoric ultimately functions under such slogans as "Korea as the Hub of Asia" or "Korea at the Center of East Asian Economy";[82] that is, the discourse eventually returns to the issues of national interest and its capacity in the era of globalization. For example, rhetoric of the necessity of "launching national brand marketing from the Korean Wave phenomenon" and "creating a representative Korean

---

[80] See Hyŏn-mi Kim, *Cultural Translation in a Global Era* (*Globŏl sidae ŭi munhwa bŏnyŏk*) (Seoul: Tto hana ŭi munhwa, 2005); Soo-yi Kim et al., *Hallyu and the Cultural Vision of the 21st Century* (*Hallyu wa 21seki munhwa bijŏn*) (Seoul: Ch'ŏngdongkŏwul Publishing, 2006); Yun-hwan Shin et al., *East Asia's Hallyu* (*Dongasia ŭi hallyu*) (Yongin: Jŏnyaewon, 2006); Sang-ch'ŏl Yu et al., *The Secrets of Hallyu DNA* (*Hallyu DNA ŭi bimil*) (Seoul: I treebook, 2005).

[81] Paek, *East Asia's Choice*.

[82] Ibid.

cultural icon that could win over the Hollywood or Japan Wave of the early 1990s" has not only been appealing to the general public but has also been given patriotic recognition as vital for national development and prosperity .[83]

This fundamental rhetoric of national interest echoes Koichi Iwabuchi's observations about Japan's relationship to the rest of the Asian region in the 1930s and 1940s:

> [I would suggest that Japanese nationalist thinkers] understood the issue of 'commonality and difference' in Japan's relationship to other Asian nations [...] mostly in terms such as "similar but superior," or "in but above Asia." As the only non-Western imperial and colonial power which invaded geographically contiguous Asian regions, Japan resorted to an ideology of pan-Asianism to camouflage its imperial ambitions.[84]

In the case of contemporary South Korea, the rhetorics and the values of Asian cultural exchanges and interactions function largely based upon the premise that the Korean Wave will continue and ensure the recuperation of the domestic economy, a construction of the image of Korea as the "Great Nation of Cultural Industry [*munhwa sanŏp dae guk*]." Thus, as with Japan in the pre-WWII period, endorsement of Asian solidarity based on cultural intimacy may be only a euphemism for South Korea's cultural/economic dominance in Asia.

---

[83] *Naeil sinmun*, 20 May 2004.

Promoting Nanta as a National Brand

The process of *Nanta*'s production and promotion overlaps with on-going domestic discussions of the cultural industry, national image-making projects, and ties with East Asia. Indeed, President Dae-jung Kim has claimed that "in the 21st century, cultural creativity will become the essential factor that evaluates a nation's capability; therefore, the government will increase its support in the development of cultural industry."[85] In such a social climate, wherein the development and success of national culture are encouraged, it seems inevitable for the initial success of *Nanta* to have garnered it a laudable reputation as "the most exemplary product which promoted an exclusive image of Korea as a nation of advanced culture and a product that garnered financial interests in global market."[86] *Nanta* has also garnered global success for itself, and contributed to the global success of South Korea, by its successful marketing to the intra-Asian tourists who visit South Korea. Because of the production's financial success in domestic as well as overseas markets, producer Song is referred to as a "Culture CEO."

Following the pace of the global trend, Song conceived *Nanta* in late 1996 as a response to nonverbal performances that have been popular in New York and in other Western urban areas since the early 1990s, such as *Tube*s by Blue Man Group, *Stomp*,

---

84 Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2002): 8.

85 *Seoul Kyŏngjae sinmun*, 06 January 2000.

86 Ibid.

Tap Dogs, and *De La Guarda*.[87] His strategic management of South Korean cultural production, in which he notes that active implementation of the Broadway entertainment system has been crucial to financial success, has been spotlighted in various domestic discourses dealing with the country's cultural industry.[88] He has also commented on the limitations of existing domestic theatre companies whose productions are handled entirely by members:

> I have been always wondering how a production like *Cats* or *Phantom of the Opera* could run on Broadway for ten years, and found out that 70-80% of the audiences were tourists. Therefore, I began promoting *Nanta* to tourist companies in Japan and Taiwan so that they could include the performance in their Korean tour packages.[89]

As a result of Song's active promotion of *Nanta* as part of South Korea's cultural tourism, he was able to establish *Nanta*'s own theatre at the heart of Seoul in 2000, mainly targeting East Asian tourists. Media promotions of *Nanta* as a great cultural mediator between South Korea and East Asia have painted the production as an exclusive, representative cultural brand of the nation itself. In 2003, *Nanta* was featured

---

[87] Song, *A Man Who Smacked the World*, 65.

[88] *Han'guk Kyŏngjae sinmun*, 7 June 2004. Since 2000, Song has been frequently featured under such topics as "The success of *Nanta* and Future of South Korean Cultural Industry" and introduced as a "successful cultural CEO" in major South Korean economic publications such as *Maeil Kyŏngjae sinmun* and *Han'guk Kyŏngjae sinmun.*

[89] *Segye Ilbo*, 13 September 2006.

in a Korean tourism promotion video called "Dynamic Korea, Hub of Asia" that also featured the president of South Korea, Moo-hyun Roh (2003-2008) (Figure 3.1):

Fig 3.1 (clockwise from top left) President Roh; *samulnori* [Traditional Korean performance ritual]; supporters at a mass festive rally for the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup; a *Nanta* performance. Video still courtesy of The Korean Overseas Information Service, 2007.[90]

Domestic news articles have strongly confirmed *Nanta*'s successful marketing to foreign tourists in Korea as well as the show's popularity among such visitors:

> "The Nanta Theatre" maintains a steady record of its revenue by having

[90] The Korean Overseas Information Service, 1999-2007, "Images of Korea," http://www.korea.net/kois/eng_vns_list.asp?ecode=video&category=Images%20of%20korea (accessed 11 January 2008).

> 80% of the audiences as the foreign tourists in Seoul. Among them, 50% of the audiences are Japanese tourists, 20% are tourists from Taiwan and others from South East Asia, and 10% from other countries such as the U.S. or Europe.[91]

In fall 2006, PMC held a special event for "*Nanta*'s millionth foreign audience" during which it named Junko Miyakawa, a Japanese tourist, and awarded her a lifetime pass to the performance.[92]

One might expect the importance of Asia's presence and its role in this process of national image-making. However, Asia in this context functions merely as a middle ground for a Korean product to make its leap onto the global stage. Song even proudly asserts that "Just like we [Koreans] import Broadway productions, other Asian countries will import Korean productions."[93] Song's rhetoric of *Nanta*'s global promotion willingly adopts rhetoric of cultural nationalism that actually desires Korean cultural industry to become like Broadway rather than maintaining its uniqueness at all costs. Thus the presence of Asian audiences in Korea, at this juncture of desires, becomes a rehearsal for the product's ultimate goal, Broadway: "We first need to test the product and its reception in the Asian market or in Europe; if we accomplish our goal here, then the door to Broadway will open."[94]

---

[91] *Munhwa Ilbo*, 30 June 2003.

[92] *Seoul sinmun*, 14 September 2006.

[93] *Maeil Kyŏngjae sinmun*, 12 September 2006.

[94] *Han'guk Kyŏngjae sinmun*, 12 February 2001.

Addressing the role of cultural tourism in the marketing of *Nanta*, I argue that while the performance underscores the value of Asian regional connections, the configuration of "Asian culture" it contains is also appropriated and/or forged in the performance's production, promotion, and consumption. What is more, all this is undertaken in order for *Nanta* to be successfully recognized as the Korean-brand entertainment product on Broadway. Therefore, *Nanta* is ambivalently located at the conjuncture of "the national," "East Asia" (regional), and "the global" (namely, Broadway and Americanization). Indeed, as the show mediates inter-Asian connections and the idea of pan-Asianism, it visually celebrates cultural fusions among various Asian regions. However, at the same time, *Nanta*'s fetishistic deployment of Asian cultural images are used as a stepping-stone for its successful entrance onto Broadway—under the nationalistic justification that a Korean brand is being recognized on the competitive global stage.

3. Experiencing *Nanta*: Performance Analysis

Various images and actions within the show demonstrate how *Nanta* is engaged in communications and interactions with foreign audiences, especially those from other East Asian countries. The production's formation of a globalized, international spectacle depends largely on the reflections of such inter-Asian communications that are assembled throughout the show. For domestic audiences, the array of traditional Korean props and settings are refashioned as objects used for transnational interactions.

The theme of "Korean-ness" projected in *The Last Empress* is largely based on a nationalistically self-centered, isolationist rationale, whereas the staging devices embodied in *Nanta* seem to emphasize their own inviting qualities as well as a sense of openness to other cultures, especially those of East Asia. For example, the food that the performers present onstage is a fusion cuisine, a hybrid mixture of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. The traditional Korean wedding ritual, carried out by two volunteers from the audience, is introduced as a simplified, touristic mode of activity. In part, *Nanta*'s commercial accomplishment can be explained by its sense of an international milieu, which is of course made possible through the performance's strategic fusion of East Asian cultural elements in a trendy non-verbal genre rather than by adherence to a nationalistic construction of Korean cultural heritage.

Opening: Envisioning a Glocalized Entertainment

The show opens with an appearance of multicultural exposition, against a background resembling *byŏngpung*, a form of traditional Korean interior decoration; the set design looks similar to Japanese or Chinese restaurant. The score, martial-arts music fused with rock to a fast, strong beat, also suggests the performance's setting as an internationalized version of a traditional Korean kitchen. Thus, through sight and sound, even before the performance actually begins *Nanta* shows the extent to which it has been devised to appeal to foreign audiences and that it is meant to prompt interactions among these audiences. As audiences are being seated, an onstage screen displays

subtitles asking them to take certain actions; these and subsequent messages are posted in Korean, English, Chinese, and Japanese:

> Please start clapping—ladies only. Now let's hear some noise—gentlemen only. Now let's hear the clapping and noise together. Audience members on the left side, exchange greetings with the people on your right side. Welcome to Sŭng-hwan Song Restaurant. Today is a wedding day. You are at an old, traditional Korean kitchen.

Most audience members would participate as asked because the nonverbal aspect of these pre-show activities encourage and stimulate them to get involved in the spectacle without any risk or difficulty. Producing scenery where the audience members from different nationalities participate together in a single activity, the pre-show works as a way of creating an aura or overall tone for the performance as an international and interactive show. By intentionally setting up nonverbal group activities, *Nanta* stimulates playful interactions albeit participants may not be able to speak intelligibly to one another.

Nanta's prologue visualizes the reinvention of traditional Korean culture by incorporating simple, ordinary household items that could be found in any old Korean country home. At the very start of the performance, the stage lights are taken down so that the only illumination is from a row of traditional Korean-style kerosene lamps (*horongbul*) at center-stage. The four performers enter the darkened stage wearing *durumagi*,[95] each holding traditional kitchen utensils and appliances such as brassware (*notgŭrŭt*), a larger brass basin (*notdaeya*) filled with water, a guard dipper (*bagaji*), a

[95] A traditional Korean man's overcoat that is black with a white, v-shaped collar.

pair of mallets for straightening cloth (*dadŭmi bangmang e*), and a fog bell (*mujong*) (Figure 3.2).

Fig 3.2 Traditional brassware (*notgŭrŭt*) used during the prologue of *Nanta*. Courtesy of the online picture gallery at the official Website of *Nanta* [http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr].

The performers sit in a row, each by a small lamp, facing the audience. All of their movements are slow, in total silence, as if carrying out a solemn ritual. As they engage with the utensils, the actors start their opening number that resembles *samulnori* (Figure 3.3).

Fig. 3.3 Staff and performer at the Nanta Theatre setting the prologue scene prior to a performance. Courtesy of the online picture gallery at the official Website of *Nanta* [http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr].

However, the solemn ritualistic atmosphere created by the dripping of water from the brass basin, the chiming bell, and the pounding mallet, all in harmony with the performers' delicate and careful motions, ultimately reconfigures the *samulnori* itself into an exclusive, de-familiarized cultural event by eliciting an aura of sophistication out of Korean folk tradition (Figure 3.4).

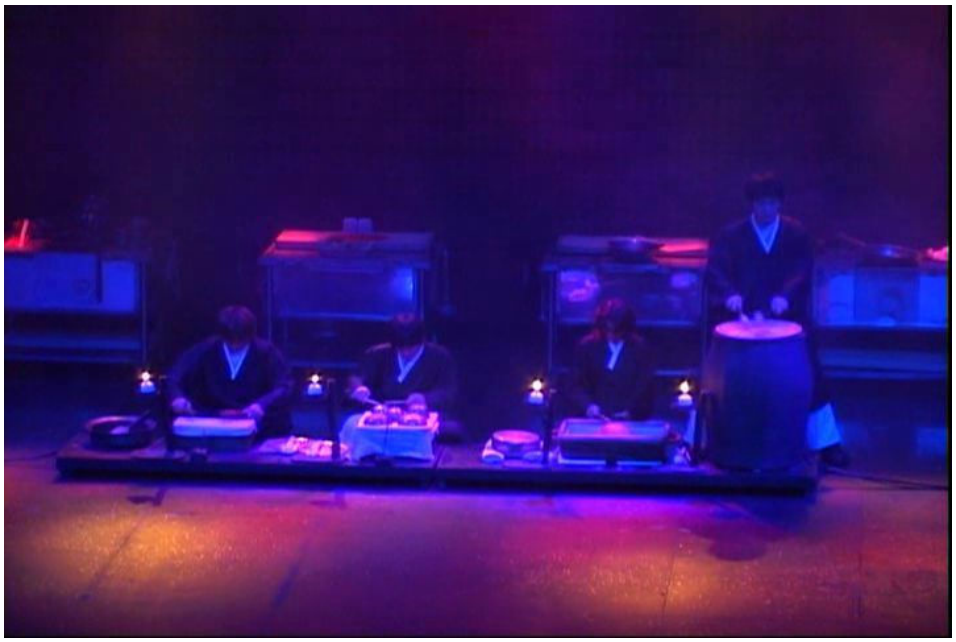

Fig. 3.4 *Nanta*'s prologue. Video still from an unofficial recording of the show. Courtesy of the PMC production, Seoul, Korea, 2007.

The performers' slow tempo at the beginning of the prologue gradually speeds up, closely following the *utdari* rhythm (a fast, powerful *samulnori* rhythm). This refashioned *samulnori* marks *Nanta* as a refined global performance, one organized to construct a fashionable, stylish image out of familiar, ordinary, old Korean kitchen utensils. Consequently, the instruments, the music, and the overall mood simultaneously invent and actualize a renewed version of Korean-ness on stage.

Korean Folklore: Folk Culture as an Urban-type Global Commodity

Although *Nanta* reveals itself as an encapsulation of glocalized entertainment and contemporary popular cultures, the performance contains variations on a uniquely Korean

folklore. Within the performance, Korean traditional icons have been altered and reapplied in order to construct a sophisticated image of Korea—an image of an advanced, confident, capable nation that possesses extraordinary cultures.

Song's use of *samulnori* rhythms throughout the performance indicates his goal of reaching the global by refurbishing Korean national uniqueness in the global market. For Song, "*samulnori* is constituted with most distinctive Korean rhythms […] and as a matter of fact, I've decided to adopt *samulnori* as a way of targeting the world market."[96] However, he also notes that "with *Nanta*'s popularity, I hope that we will be able to demonstrate before the foreigners that there is something more besides *pansori* in our proud Korean cultural assets."[97] For Song, in this context, *pansori* symbolizes atavistic, inscrutable piece of tradition that cannot approach foreign audiences as a marketable product. In *Nanta*, reconstructions of Korean traditional culture as stylish, urban-type performance represent the producer's vision of an advanced, global culture.

Originally, *samulnori* as a percussion quartet comprised of a *buk* [barrel drum], a *janggu* [hourglass-shaped drum], a *jing* [gong], and a *k'waengari*[small gong] (Figure 3.5):

---

96 Song, *A Man Who Smacked the World*, 68.

97 *Maeil Kyŏngjae sinmun*, 14 January 1999.

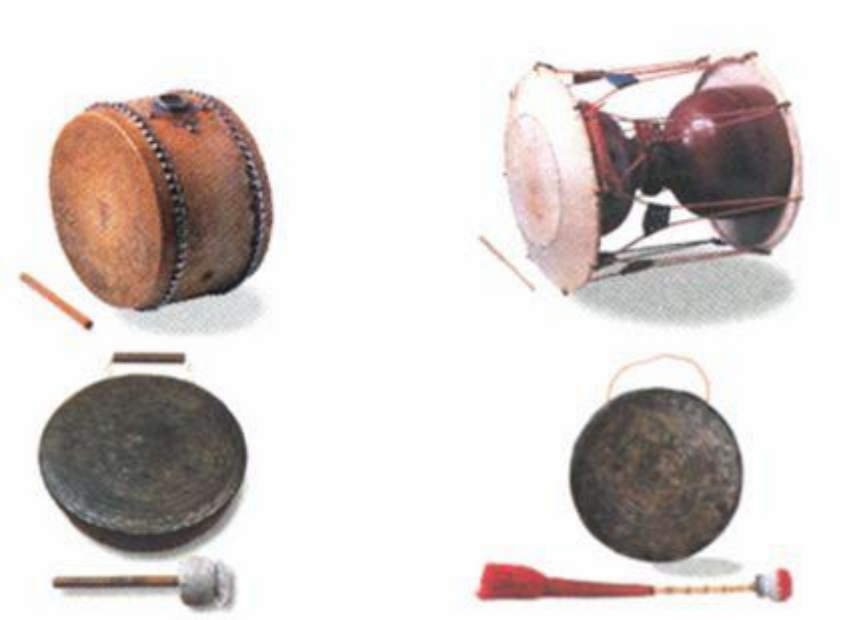

Fig. 3.5 (clockwise from top left) *Buk*, *janggu*, *k'waengari,* and *jing*. Courtesy of the online photo gallery at The National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts Website [http://www.ncktpa.go.kr].

The names of these four instruments supply the title of this folk genre: *sa* [four], *mul* [things], *nori* [play], which translates as "four things at play." *Samulnori*'s rhythmic patterns are derived from ancient music performed outdoors, by farmers, with acrobatics and dance. The music also includes elements of shamanistic ritual [*gut*], dance, and theatre, forming a complex array of cultural practices essential to rural agriculture, religion, and entertainment in pre-modern Korea.[98]

Just as common street objects such as trashcans and plastic bins are utilized as instruments in *Stomp*, *Nanta* replaces the four instruments used in authentic *samulnori* with common objects found in ordinary households. For example, metallic instruments

---

[98] The National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts, 2003, "About Gugak," Samulnori, http://www.ncktpa.go.kr/eng/aboutg/trad_ins_view.jsp?gugak_id=17 (accessed 3 January 2008).

jing and *k'waengari* are replaced by frying pans, knives, brassware, and copper plates to produce sharp metal sounds and non-metallic instruments such as *buk* and *janggu* are replaced by rubber basins, cutting boards, plastic water containers, and mallets that create soft, blunt sounds.

In addition, a *ch'ŏnhadaejanggun*[99] figure stands at stage left, at the front, to showcase a shamanistic ritual usually associated with *samulnori* (Figure 3.6).

Fig. 3.6 (Left) An actual *ch'ŏnhadaejanggun*.[100] Photo courtesy of Packerss, 2007. (Right) An abbreviated *ch'ŏnhadaejanggun* used in *Nanta*. Video still from an unofficial recording of the show. Courtesy of the PMC production, Seoul, Korea, 2007.

[99] The word, literally translated as "a great warrior under the sky," refers to a long, narrow wooden figure of a man. Traditionally, such a statue was placed at a village entrance as a talisman or guardian, or used as a boundary marker.

[100] Personal Blog, n.d., http://blog.naver.com/packerss (accessed 6 January 2008).

However, in *Nanta* this symbol of traditional ritual has been modified to provide comic relief to contemporary audiences without being treated disrespectfully. As a part of the stage setting, this abbreviated talisman functions as if to bless the theatrical wedding ceremony (as well as the real success of the performance). Throughout the show, disjointed from sequential episodes in the performance itself, the performers randomly participate in fragments of ritualistic sequences. The comic sight of performers (collectively or individually) in silent, exaggerated prayer before the talisman induces nervous laughter from the spectators. Such motions also provide an enticing cultural display for foreign spectators (Figure 3.7).

Fig. 3.7 (Top) Performers praying before the talisman during the show. Courtesy of the online picture gallery at the official Website of *Nanta* [http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr]. (Bottom) Another praying sequence. Video still from an unofficial recording of the show. Courtesy of the PMC production, Seoul, Korea, 2007.

In addition, the *sangmonori* show, which is joined near the end of *Nanta* by the other actors and the four actors' *samgomu* [three-drum dance], figuratively demonstrates not only the multiple roles that are involved in shaping and transmitting Korea's national desire to create a global product but also the Korean collective fantasy of advancing the country to become one of the top nations, both culturally and economically. *Nanta*'s embodiment of the struggle between the national and the global, along with its alterations of traditional folk cultures, expresses such national desires through the projected images on stage without offering a simplifying or problematic false resolution of them.

Another traditional Korean folk art motif included in *Nanta* is *sangmonori*, a dance whose name is taken from the word *sangmo* (a hat with either a moveable feather or a long ribbon attached at the top). A performer wearing this hat spins the ribbon by moving his head while dancing (Figure 3.8).[101] *Nanta*'s version of *sangmonori*, although similar, is much more vigorous.

Fig. 3.8 Traditional *sangmonori*. Courtesy of Naver search engine, 2007.

101 While *samulnori* players play their percussion instruments, other performers create various formations, playing amongst themselves, or show off their musical ability or acrobatics by exhibiting *sangmonori*. The National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts, 2003, "About Gugak," Pangut, http://www.ncktpa.go.kr/eng.htm (accessed 4 January 2008).

This renewed, sophisticated edition of *sangmonori* is performed under psychedelic lighting and blaring rock music while the dancers frantically spin their ribbons, which encompass the entire stage (Figure 3.9).

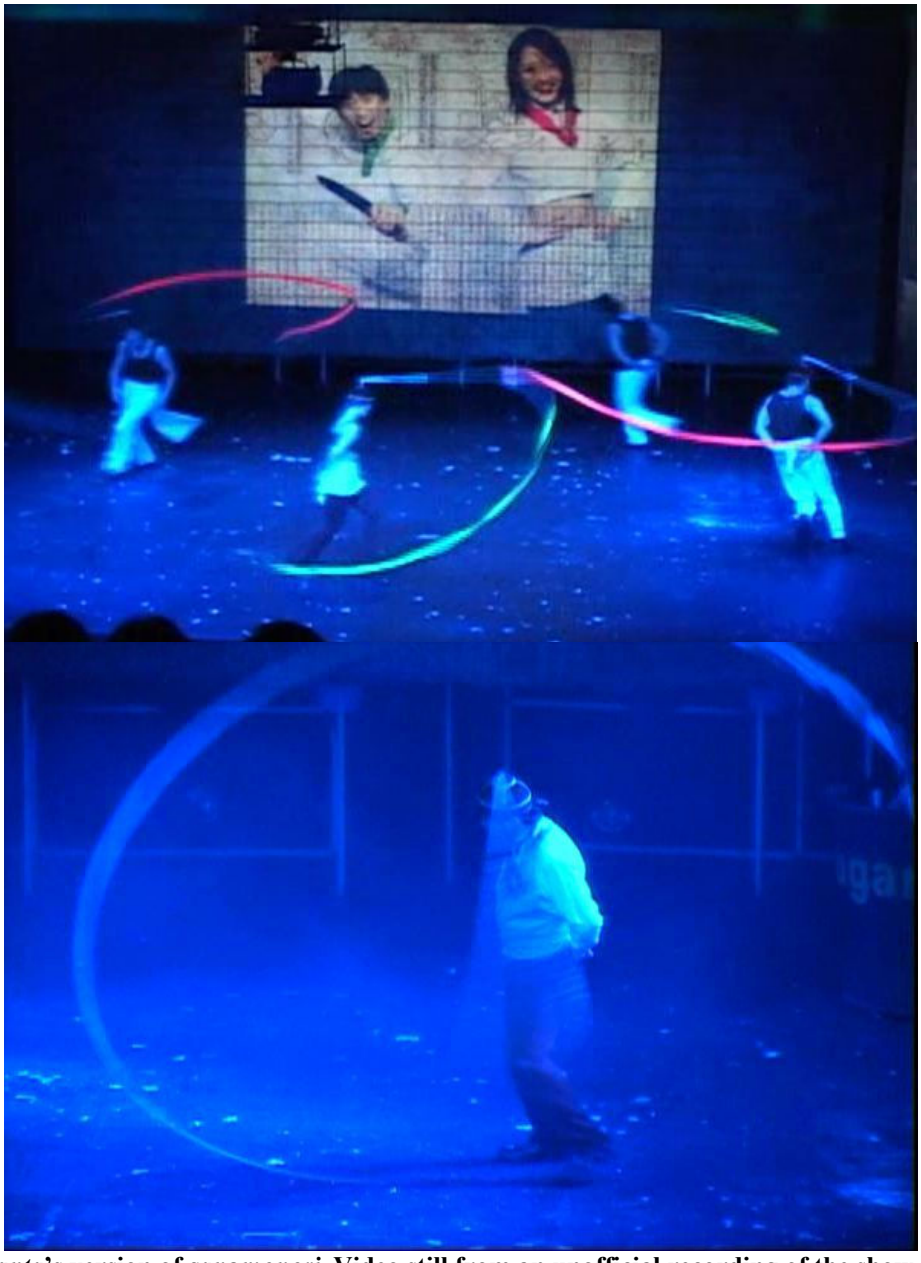

Fig. 3.9 *Nanta*'s version of *sangmonori*. Video still from an unofficial recording of the show. Courtesy of the PMC production, Seoul, Korea, 2007.

Each dancer continuously draws gigantic ribbon-circles that glow in the half-dark scene. This embodiment, and its visuality, suggest that the nation's culture could embrace or even contain the global stage.

Whereas a traditional *samgomu* contains a group of female performers dancing while playing the three-drums installed in parallel across the stage (Figure 3.10), the *samgomu* performance in *Nanta* shows off its new, urbanized, masculine characteristics as a way of confirming the capability of the national culture. Traditional *samgomu* is

Fig. 3.10 Traditional *samgomu* performance. Courtesy of *Urichum* on-line Café [http://café.naver.com/urichum].

also noted for its flowery, bright, and colorful visual effect as well as the delicate and orderly nature of its sound and motions; however, the alternative *samgomu* we encounter in *Nanta* is grungy and tough. The nontraditional energy of *Nanta*'s *samgomu* is nonetheless endowed with a festive mood by the bright-red lighting that comes on as it begins (Figure 3.11).

Fig. 3.11 *Samgomu* performance in *Nanta*. Courtesy of the on-line picture gallery at the official Website of *Nanta* [http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr].

Four stalls of the *samgomu* instruments are seen onstage (rubber basins and plastic water containers instead of the original drums). The four cooks suddenly throw off their chef's garb and enact the *samgomu* in black tank tops, showing off their perspiring muscular bodies as they wildly strike the plastic containers. The traditional Korean cultural icons exhibited in *Nanta*, such as *samulnori* instruments and its various rhythmic patterns, shamanistic ritual, and dance, have been altered and fetishized as global commodities. Therefore, I suggest that the process of such alterations and the overall framework of *Nanta* (re)construct Korean folk traditions not just as tokens of national particularity but rather as evidence of the nation's creativity, power, and confidence in the global era.

From Nanta to Cookin': Broadway--Always the Final Destination, but Not an Abstract Symbol of Success

The revision process undergone by *Nanta* in preparation for its Broadway debut, as well as the specific alterations themselves, demonstrate how the production had to adopt and preserve the longstanding popular stereotype of East Asians' racial homogeneity—not only as part of its sales pitch in the West but especially for the U.S. audience. The original Korean title was changed to *Cookin'* because "the original title could appeal to the audiences in the Asian regions without any problem, for they are familiar with the Chinese characters, but it would sound too strange for the Western audiences."[102] For producer Song, who was operating in a different context from that faced by the producers of *The Last Empress*, Broadway was not an abstract symbol for global success. Although Song considered Broadway to be *Nanta*'s ultimate destination, the location was for him also a specific area where financial profits could be reaped. Thus, Song's ways of reaching the *Cookin'*s New York audience reveal concrete marketing procedures and sensitivity to the play's intercultural reception, rather than adherence to an exclusivist idea of Korean traditional cultural uniqueness.

Nanta's use of pan-Asian images such as dumplings, *Kungfu*, and Japanese-style cuisine [*Benihana*] has helped make the performance more attractive to Broadway and its audiences. As a way of targeting American audiences, *Nanta*'s fusion of Asian images and themes resonates with the popular Asian stereotypes circulating in the U.S. media.

---

[102] Song, *A Man Who Smacked the World*, 133.

Consequently, the show allows American audiences to immerse themselves in a manifestation of East Asian culture that is complex but also easily accessible. For example, images of martial arts (usually symbolized by Jackie Chan, Bruce Lee, and *Kungfu*), the Samurai, and *Benihana* constitute most Americans' engagement with Chinese and Japanese culture—and *Nanta* easily allows Western viewers to perceive the show in similar terms. As Song explains, the vital importance of including the martial arts in *Nanta*: "Prior to our departure to Broadway, we included the martial arts scene because it is something that will greatly attract the American audiences. We invited a Chinese martial arts specialist a month before our departure for the performers' extra trainings."[103] The performance emphasizes various icons of East Asian popular cultures whose inclusion have, in turn, made possible the show's successful exportation to Broadway.

In fact, *Nanta*'s revision began in late 1998 for its debut at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1999 as well as its launching on Broadway. New scenes and features included the *Benihana* scene with flaming fire; chefs playing Frisbee using the plates as if in a circus; acrobatics; the *Kungfu* fighting scene wherein the male actors imitate Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan; and short magic shows (Figure 3.12).

[103] *Hangyŏre sinmun*, 4 October 2004.

Fig. 3.12 Actor Won-hae Kim as the Head Chef, demonstrating *Benihana*. Courtesy of the online picture gallery at the official Website of *Nanta* [http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr].

In order to remake *Nanta* into a form more suitable for American audiences, Song explains how he contracted with The Broadway Asia Company (BAC), a "management, production, licensing, and consultation company concentrated on performing arts projects between the U.S., Europe, and the Asia Pacific Region."[104] Regarding his relationship with BAC, Song reveals how he relied on the comments made by its agents and the results that came from hiring its show doctors to revise *Nanta*. Throughout his

[104] The Broadway Asia Company, 2008, "About Us," http://www.broadwayasia.com (accessed 11 January 2008).

narrative, Song confesses that BAC's commissions for *Nanta*'s Broadway promotions were steep, but he also notes the indispensability of retaining his connection with the company and affirms that all of these efforts were justified for the product's promotion on Broadway:

> In the fall of 1998, we signed a contract with The Broadway Asia Company about giving them the right to distribute *Nanta* in various parts of the world except Korea. This contract was made under condition that aside from paying them 15% of the total earnings as a commission, we must also reimburse the entire expense they spend on promoting *Nanta*. [….] Moreover, they suggested that we need to revise the performance by hiring the show doctors under commission at The Broadway Asia Company: Lynne Taylor-Corbett added elements of slapstick comedy to the performance; magic skits, martial arts, as well as short stunt scenes were added by a circus specialist Lawrence F. Pisoni; and Marcia Dodge, a comedy doctor, intensified the food show parts by affixing a teppanyaki style to the performance.[105]

In fact, the poster ad for *Nanta*'s performance during 2004-2005 season at The Minetta Lane Theatre (Figure 3.13) definitively illustrates how the show deployed Asian stereotypes that already functioned as popular U.S. cultural products as a way of targeting Broadway audiences:

---

[105] Song, *A Man Who Smacked the World*, 116-119.

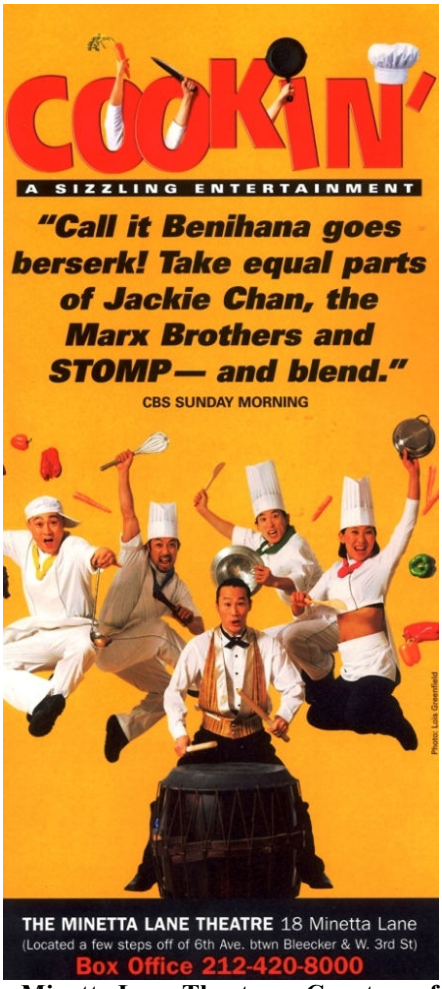

Fig. 3.13 A poster for *Cookin'* at The Minetta Lane Theatre. Courtesy of the on-line picture gallery at the official Website of *Nanta* [http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr].

As shown in the above poster, *Nanta* on Broadway aims to appeal to American audiences through its fusion of East Asian cultural symbols that are already iconic in the West. In this outlandish but not-too-unfamiliar visual spectacle there appear the five characters, costumed and posed in exaggerated, cartoonish ways. The poster's bright yellow background, the vividly colored show logo in red, the four performers' hilarious facial expressions and their body postures, together with the Manager's stunned, comic appearance recall elements typically found in popular Asian slapstick comedies, locating

the show visually somewhere between *The Iron Chef*, a Japanese cooking program popular in the U.S., and Hong Kong-produced martial arts films. Accordingly, the words "Benihana" and "Jackie Chan," which appear embedded in a quote from *CBS Sunday Morning*, function as the main key words that represent the Asiatic nature and quality of this show. "Benihana" indicates Japanese, teppenyaki-style cuisine where the food is prepared before the customers at their tables; it is the most well-known face of Japanese cuisine within American popular concept-variations of Japanese food. Also, the name "Jackie Chan" immediately signifies that *Nanta* presents martial arts or other comic *Kungfu* style actions, which reveals how *Nanta*'s promoters intentionally relied on the fact that martial arts (in this case, symbolized by the name of a Chinese actor) deploy the global currency of action and violence and have been the principal type of popular Asian *Kungfu*-style cultural product in the U.S. Not only does *Nanta*'s deployment of popular Asian cultural elements demonstrate the marketability of racial caricatures, such stereotypes aid this foreign product's entry into the United States' crowded performing entertainment market.

Like the ambitious goal described by the producer of *The Last Empress*, Song sincerely explains his personal dream of introducing and promoting his production on Broadway and expresses his excitement after *Nanta*'s launch in New York City in 2003: "Launching *Nanta* on Broadway has been the one and only dream of my life, and it became true at last."[106] However, "Broadway" in Song's case has been concretely

[106] Ibid., 172.

conceived as a profitable market instead of being utilized as an empty signifier of South Korea's global advancement.

While *Nanta*'s key objective is to pursue Broadway, it also aims to emphasize the importance of Asian regional connections via the theatrical visualization of East-Asian cultural fusion—in South Korea, for Asian audiences, as well as in America for Western audiences. Consequently, the representation of pan-Asian cultures in *Nanta* works in multiple directions: as a tool for highlighting the performance's eligibility in the West, a sign of pan-Asian solidarity, a stepping-stone for the production to achieve global visibility and success, and a way to envision Asian cultural sharing and connections.

Pastiche of East Asian Cultures: Performing Cultural Tourism via Food and the Presence of East Asian Tourists

In part, the image of *Nanta* as a global show has been formulated by the number of East Asian tourists made visible via the performance's audience participation sessions. The act of cooking, constituted as the main theme of this performance, also creates a spectacle that invites the audiences to join together in an act of consumption. The universality of food, together with *Nanta*'s setting (a traditional Korean wedding ceremony followed by a wedding banquet), endows the show with a higher level of understanding across different cultures. In terms of cultural legibility, the staging elements employed in *Nanta* clearly highlight its role as a promoter of Korean cultures rather than as a pure entertainment vehicle. The performance's contents as well as its

iconography have been designed to carry an aesthetic brand of tourism advertisement that displays and promotes appealing cultural commodities.

Therefore, the performance encourages the spectators to perceive the act of cooking as access to a full cultural experience, even as the totality of that experience. *Nanta*'s main theme (food and cooking) works as a catalyst that binds the performance and foreign audience members (predominantly from other Asian countries) in peculiar ways: the images of food and acts of cooking during the performance serve as gateways for engagement with Korean culture because audience participation in the performance allows immediate access to the onstage referents. However, to further increase the level of affinity as well as to more clearly display the idea of Asian commonality, the choice of food shown onstage derives from East Asian cultures but is abridged to a few signature dishes such as dumplings, bowls of soup, and Beijing-Duck (the latter a stuffed-animal replica)—familiar dishes that can be easily identified by the East Asian audiences and thus draw them into the performance. Given the fact that only *bindaettŏk* (Korean pancakes) were introduced as the show's choice of food in *Nanta*'s 1997 premiere version; we can verify how the contemporary version (post-1998) has been keenly shaped by the increased presence of East Asian audiences.[107]

Nanta employs audience participation as a crucial means to establish the performance as a successful tourist commodity. As a way of envisioning the show as a

---

[107] According to *Nanta*'s 1997 premiere version script, the performers make *bindaettŏk* and deliver the food to some of the audience members, rather than letting them participate in the process of cooking. Arko Arts Library & Information Center, n.d., "Script Archive," Nanta, http://artsonline.arko.or.kr/navigator?act=playreadview&idx=426. (accessed 7 December 2007).

sort of pan-Asian festival, the performance prioritizes foreign audiences rather than Korean audiences in asking them to carry out two onstage activities: the soup-tasting scene and the dumpling-challenge scene. Five or six audience members, predominantly from Taiwan, Japan, and Indonesia are pre-chosen as volunteers before the curtain rises. About one-third of the way through the performance, the chefs decide to ask two audience members to taste the soup they have just made onstage. Instead of randomly choosing these volunteers, two chefs knowingly move downstage, into the audience, in order to escort a pair of foreign spectators (a male and a female) back onto the stage. When the volunteers appear onstage, they introduce their names and nationalities.[108] As these audience-participants taste their bowls of ready-made soup, the chefs help them put on a simplified versions of traditional Korean wedding attires and headpieces (Figure 3.14).

Fig. 3.14 (Left) Japanese audience participants in the soup-tasting scene. Courtesy of the online picture gallery at the official Website of *Nanta* [http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr]. (Right) Audience participants from Italy, at the closing of the traditional Korean wedding ceremony. Photo courtesy of Gio, 2007 [http://www.flickr.com/photos/gio346034].

[108] In the two performances I saw in 2002 and 2005, the volunteer audience members were from Taiwan.

The soup-tasting scene suddenly turns out to be an abridged representation of a traditional Korean wedding ritual, set by the overall theme of *Nanta*. Similarly, the audience-participants carrying out the dumpling-challenge scene fill important roles in constructing *Nanta* as a performance that is not limited to pure entertainment but is instead a venue that aspires to achieve at least some of its efficacy through ad-libbed audience interactions. Such a spontaneous mood (but actually pre-planned), activated by foreign audience-participants, assists in the process of branding and promoting *Nanta* as a performance aspiring to become a pan-Asian festival.

Approximately halfway through the performance, the chefs divide the audience into two groups and name them Red Team and Blue Team. Across the back of the stage, a large banner appears that says "Dumpling challenge" in Korean, English, Japanese, and Chinese (Figure 3.15).

Fig. 3.15 The "Dumpling challenge" scene. Video still from an unofficial recording of the show. Courtesy of the PMC production, Seoul, Korea, 2007.

The chefs escort two foreign audience members (also pre-arranged) from each team onto the stage to have them race one another in making dumplings (Figure 3.16).

Fig. 3.16 Foreign audience participants in the dumpling competition scene. Courtesy of the online picture gallery at the official Website of *Nanta* [http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr].

The Red and the Blue Team (i.e., the rest of the audience) are encouraged to cheer their members competing onstage. First, the chefs give the dumpling-makers brief directions and a little assistance. Then, after having set the competitive mood among the seated audience members as well as the onstage participants, they quietly exit. The participants, although they become startled when they discover that that they are alone onstage, carry on with their dumpling competition with the help of the audiences' cheering. The game ends when the chefs reappear to judge the winner.

For domestic audiences, the abovementioned scenes created by foreign audience-participants promote and further confirm *Nanta* as an attractive Korean global product that is enjoyed by foreigners. Or, more precisely, the sight of such audience-participants (mainly East Asian tourists) has been deliberately devised by the producers (by putting Korean spectators and non-Korean audience-participants in display for each other) to

convince Korean spectators of the show's power to enact or even mobilize inter-Asian connections—all in the name of *Nanta* as "the first contemporary Asian performance to open its own off-Broadway theatre."[109]

The sight of foreign audience members embodied within the performance, actively carrying out their roles, and the rest of the audience communicating with them by cheering and clapping, endows *Nanta* with the aura of an international venue. By having the audiences actually take part in the process of cooking and by having the other audience members join in the competition, rather than just presenting the act of cooking by the performers, the show consciously creates a moment of cultural embodiment and spectatorship that is crucial for its shaping as a tourist commodity.

Closing: Physical Strength and Energy Visualized as the Global

Nanta constructs its performance not only as a model of distinctive national culture and a form of fused East Asian cultural elements but also as an ordeal of mental dexterity, speed, power, and endurance. As illustrated below, the representation of the traditional Korean kitchen within *Nanta* as a stage for physical and strategic entertainment visually and performatively expresses the competitive state of South Korean national culture in the global market. Such visualization induces audiences to confirm the advancement as well as the powerful capability of South Korea. Both of these concepts are figuratively demonstrated by the finale (Figures 3.17, 3.18).

---

[109] *Kyŏnghyang sinmun*, 03 January 2005.

Fig. 3.17 The performers at the finale, drumming the barrels in a shape of Korean *jangtok* [pottery containers used to store condiments], each labeled (from the left) *doenjang*, *gochujang*, kimchi, and Sugar. Courtesy of the online picture gallery at the official Website of *Nanta* [http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr].

Fig. 3.18 Water-splashing barrels and the performers drumming. Courtesy of the online picture gallery at the official Website of *Nanta* [http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr].

Here, *Nanta* reconfigures the kitchen space, a traditional location for "women's work," as a space for the deployment of physical and artistic energies that are the conventional markers of masculinity. In this context, the performance actively deploys such markers of masculinity to visibly reshape and mask the traditional feminine space (read in its traditional contexts as limited, provincial, and powerless) into a sophisticated, global spectacle.

In the first half of the sequence, the four performers vigorously drum rubber barrels in the shapes of traditional Korean *jangtok*.[110] A label on each of the barrels indicates its contents: sugar, kimchi, *gochujang*, and *doenjang*, written either in Korean/Chinese characters or English letters. The visual representation of an old Korean kitchen turns into a festive, energetic space as the performers start throwing thousands of small, light plastic balls into the audiences and the audiences then start throwing the balls back to the stage. In the second half of the final scene, the Manager joins the crew and all five of them resume the drum performance. But now, water has been poured onto the tops of the barrels so that each beat produces a splash; the visuality of such actions as a whole creates a dynamic, energetic spectacle.

The reconfiguration of an old Korean kitchen as a sophisticated, modern entertainment space full of vitality conflates with the producers' imagined global commodity. Likewise, the fragments of the fantastically rearranged traditional kitchen stand in as fetish objects: the reenactment of the old kitchen and its props induces

---

[110] Pottery containers Korean women use for fermenting and preserving soy sauce, soy bean paste (*doenjang*), kimchi, or red pepper paste (*gochujang*).

domestic audiences to confirm the national beauty of these objects as well as to perceive them as fabulous global products. The spectacle of performers fiercely striking their instruments and their energetic bodies, the sight of internationalized Korean décor overhung by signs in foreign languages, and the sights and sounds of excited foreign audience members interacting with the performance have all been constructed as an attempt to concurrently find and stage both the national culture and the concept of the global.

4. Conclusion

One remarkable aspects of *Nanta* is how it attempts to interact with the East Asian region as well as how it attempts to connect the national to the regional—whether or not these connections are based on communicative interaction or on South Korea's desire to be at the dominant center of Asia. Similar to the underlying rationale and context of *The Last Empress*, the production of *Nanta* also aspires to find and project a sense of national integrity through performance. Likewise, Broadway still remains as a desirable goal and ultimate desires remain embedded in the production as it strives to emulate the Global Power House (i.e. the Broadway). These goals, desires, and symbols are all clearly displayed as well as justified and idealized as signs of national development and interests.

However, whereas the core theme of *The Last Empress* obstructs the performance's potential to communicate beyond the national boundary, various aspects of *Nanta*'s performance as well as its implicit goal of global promotion shows its active reach toward encounters between different cultures and audiences. For one thing, while Broadway for Song still is a great fantasy despite *Nanta*'s actual success in New York, his promotional strategies and marketing process have shown that he did not endorse "Broadway" as an empty signifier or an abstract symbol of national achievement (the way *The Last Empress* was hyped as the first Korean musical on Broadway). Instead, via interactions with local agents, Song efficiently targeted Broadway audiences by realistically revising the performance with popular entertainment elements such as slapstick, martial arts, and so forth.

By contrast, Yun's obsession about a "Korean-brand musical" allowed few outside interactions that did not promote cross-cultural communication. His perseverance in staging "Korean uniqueness" resulted in the additional Shaman Rite scene as a means of promoting an aura of mysticism in *The Last Empress*. But in this case, the drive toward Korean particularity or its cultural exclusivism turned out to be merely an expression of global fetishism.

As a transnational performance, *Nanta* is poised to become a venue for multicultural communications, especially among East Asian audiences. In this case, the compulsory physical encounters embedded in the theatrical performance have also promoted physical interactions among people of different nationalities; *Nanta*'s transnational (or inter-Asian) movement is noteworthy for this reason alone. Furthermore, the production's regional circulation has increased cultural multiplicity in

Asia. *Nanta*'s future promotion in the region will allow more people to enjoy a type of entertainment venue that is different from what they would find on Broadway.

Indeed, evidence of myriad strands of the desire for Korea to become the center of Asia, or to enact an alternative version of global hegemony through *Nanta*, is hard to avoid. Amid the powerful visualizations and the sounds of the drums banging, I see the producer, the media, the audiences, and the nation itself releasing their desires in a theatre of energy. I hope that the energy of such desires emitted from *Nanta* will redirect the deeply rooted mindset that consistently wills this nation to become part of the powerful center. I hope that *Nanta*'s energy will call for new perspectives and insights that could avert the dangers of cultural nationalism—a blinding force that consumes many as one in the name of national pride and patriotism.

Chapter 4. Performing Nationalism: The Makings of the National Stage at the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup[111]

1. Prologue

In this examination of the social spectacle that took place in South Korea during the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup, I portray the sporting event as a national stage upon which both individual citizens' excitement and the power of nationalist fever were displayed. Through interpreting the South Koreans' mass festive rallying as a social performance, this chapter examines diverse ways that South Koreans experienced, expressed, and actualized their national sentiments through participating. I also question how a nation or individual citizens respond to and accommodate the imagined global gaze that is stimulated and intensified through mega-events like the World Cup. The application of a performance model to these questions illuminates phenomena wherein the concept of nation-ness intersected with individual creativity and practices as well as their desire for global visibility.

During the 2002 World Cup finals, millions of Koreans gathered in public streets and squares in South Korea to support the national football team. During the competition, 2,021 large screens were set up nationwide at 1,868 locations; on 25 July,

[111] An earlier version of this paper was presented with Younghan Cho at the annual conference of the American Comparative Literature Association in Puebla, Mexico, 19-22 April 2007. I am grateful for the comments made at the convention.

more than 7 million people gathered.[112] The intensity of this nationally expressed excitement and affection had been building as the Korean team reached the semifinal match for the first time in the history of Korean soccer. At the rallies, along with showing dynamic forms of support for the team, South Koreans not only identified with one another under the powerful slogan "We are One, We are Korean," they also enjoyed themselves.

Inevitably, international sports events such as the World Cup generate fanatical reactions, especially when one's own national team (or the team of the hosting country) performs well throughout the matches. However, the implications of 2002 World Cup and its venue transcend its label as a global mega-event: this one was unique and meaningful because for the first time it was hosted in Asia, a marginalized football arena compared to Europe or Latin America. In response, South Korean team supporters designated both the national team and the South Korean nation itself "Pride of Asia" when the team made it to the semi-finals, a feat no Asian team had accomplished in more than seven decades.[113]

This chapter interprets the 2002 World Cup spectacle in South Korea as a social performance in which the sporting event became a national stage, with Korean supporters

---

[112] Soon-Hee Whang (Sun-hee Hwang), "Korean and Japan 2002: Public Space and Popular Celebration" in *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup*, ed. Alan Tomlinson & Christopher Young (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005): 215-231.

[113] Joe Havely, "Korea's Cup marathon: 'Pride of Asia,'" 22 December 2003, CNN.com, http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLDcup/06/25/korea.progress/index.html (accessed 31 January 2008).

as performers and the worldwide audience as spectators. Because this national stage featured citizens, people became the containers of national images, values, and identities. Through participating in the performance, these people momentarily became social actors and actresses in what can be termed a theatre of success. Their performed and embodied experiences provide ample resources for analyzing the status of nationalism in South Korea and for addressing related issues of identity and social memory. Using a performance model allows the examination of human events through theatrical elements such as actions and signs; the specifics of social, cultural, and political contexts; and tensions that, I believe, more traditional readings do not recognize.[114] My analysis includes ways that Korean nationalism, conjoined with global desire, was represented by mass participants' modes of spontaneous gathering, style and fashion, and expressions and gestures.

In order to examine how nationalism permeated public as well as private places during the event, several qualitative research methods were used that embrace an interdisciplinary approach. The basic method, much prized in performance studies, is fieldwork as participant observation.[115] On 25 July 2002, I was in the midst of the festive rally, where I cheered for my national team and also observed the generally fervent societal mood. To fully explicate this performance of nation-ness and extend discussion of this panoramic event into other aspects of the nation such as its cityscapes, people, and cultures, my review also includes theoretical and historical discussion about

---

[114] Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

Korean nationalism and textual analyses of self-collected data such as newspaper reports, print ads, TV shows, commercials, and street photographs.[116] Such collaborative analysis aims not only to provide a comprehensive description of refashioned nation-ness during this specific event but also to promulgate a useful discussion of the politics of nationalism in the global era.

2. The Presence of Nationalism in South Korean Everyday Life: Overview

The mass festive rally held in South Korea during the 2002 World Cup final matches between South Korea and Japan was much more than a sporting event. During the rally, millions of people wore the same colored shirts, carried the national flag, and passionately supported their national team. The huge, grand, sensory and symbolic codes that the World Cup provided were spectacle par excellence that not only surprised Korean society but also stunned the world.[117] Korean mass media continually reported World Cup-related news; people changed their schedules according to the Korean team's

---

115 Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

116 I searched newspaper reports using the keyword "nationalism" during the World Cup period from www.kinds.or.kr, which provides South Korean newspaper articles. I focused on opinionated reports such as columns and editorials.

117 J.J. MacAloon, "Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies," in J.J. MacAloon (eds.), *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance* (Philadelphia: A Publication of the Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984): 241-280.

games; and people constantly talked about the team and the event. When I stayed in Seoul during June and July 2002, I could not but be surprised by—for example—the telephone greetings of almost every business and public service: "Hello, this is XX Beauty Parlor cheering for the Korean National Team, how can I help you?" Indeed, the World Cup went beyond the stadium and even the realm of sport to become omnipresent in the everyday lives of South Koreans.

Today, South Korean media continue to represent "the World Cup as either a mere capitalistic spectacle by critical leftist intellectuals or a patriotic revelation by right-wing instigators."[118] At the time, however, the latter praised the revival of collectivity or national unity among the nation's youth, who were often criticized for their selfishness or lack of patriotism, while the former expressed a contrary concern about South Korea's dominant nationalist sentiments or even fascistic mood. After the championship, several researchers attempted to evaluate the nationalistic passion.[119] Summarizing the

---

[118] Hae-joang Cho Han (Hye-jŏng Cho Han), Yoshitake Mori, Toshiya Ueno, Hiroki Ogasawara, "Introduction," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5.1 (2004): 5.

[119] To examine the academic discussions on the World Cup, I referred to the following articles: the special edition of *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* (2004, Vol. 5.1), focusing on Hae-joang Cho Han, Seong-tae Hong (Sŏng-t'ae Hong), Hyun-mee Kim (Hyŏn-mi Kim), and Toshiya Ueno; the special editions of *Dangdae Bip'yŏng* [*Contemporary Criticism*] (2002, Vol. 19, 1-2), focusing on the works of Hye-joang Cho Han, Jin-wung Jŏng, and Hyŏk-bŏm Kwon; the special edition of *Munwha Kwahak* [*Culture Science*], focusing on Myŏng-wu Noh and Dong-yŏn Yi. I also examined *Football Goes East: Business, culture and people's game in China, Japan and South Korea*, eds. Wolfram Manzenreiter and John Horne (New York: Routledge, 2004), focusing on John Horne, Wolfram Manzenreiter, Hongik Chung (Hong-ik Chŏng), Yoon Sung Choi (Yun-sŏng Ch'oe), Hiroki Ogasawara, and Haruo Nogawa; *National Identity and global*

myriad of discussions about the "Red Devils phenomenon," Seong-tae Hong suggests that academic analyses can be divided into "festival theories" or "madness theories."[120]

Although these studies contribute to reflecting and reconfiguring the Korean national frenzy and the World Cup event, they tend to be based on old dichotomies such as madness vs. festival, global events vs. local happenings, mass mobilization vs. voluntary enthusiasm, the state vs. civil society, etc.[121] These sorts of either/or approaches are not sufficient to unveil the nuanced, lively characteristics of nation-ness that emerged during this spectacle.

Citizen involvement in the World Cup competition included personal, emotional, and even avid aspects of constituting nationalism in South Korea. As Roger Levermore suggests, international football can act as a surrogate theatre for instigating "passionate nationalism."[122] Therefore, a nationalistic whirl such as this should be closely examined in relation to the dominance of nationalism in Korean society, particularly in light of the crisis of the late 1990s. Because the notion of nationalism has always been powerful

---

Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup, eds. A. Tomplinson and C. Young (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), focusing on Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young, J. J MacAloon, and Soon-Hee Whang.

120 Hong divides festive theory into two parts: arguments on Communitarianism that emphasize collectivism, and arguments of Culturalism which are based on individualism. The madness theory, held by a minority, can also be divided into two parts: fascist madness and reflexivity on statism. See Hong, "The World Cup, the Red Devils, and Related Arguments in Korea," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5.1 (2004): 89.

121 Cho Han, 2004; Hong, 2004; Joen and Yun, 2004; MacAloon, 2005.

122 Roger Levermore, *Sport and International Relations: An Emerging Relationship* (London: Routledge, 2004).

and omnipresent in the everyday life of Koreans, nationalistic passion during the World Cup must be seen as a consequence both of its prevalence and the crisis it has undergone in the era of globalization.

Key events in modern Korean history, especially the colonial occupation by the Japanese Empire (1910-45) and the Korean War (1950-52), have intensified and transformed the characteristics of Korean nationalism.[123] The colonial occupation rendered nationalism as a desperate, indisputable, and indispensable way for Koreans to pursue their dream of their own sovereign nation-state. Their sense of nationalism, awakened by the occupation, was both intensified and distorted by the civil war and the subsequent partition of South and North Korea in 1952 onwards. As a result of partition, not only was a centuries-old sense of brotherhood suddenly converted into hostility, the South Korean government began to actively utilize threats from the North for political purposes (for example, national memories of the Civil War were maintained for historicity and also as evidence of current and future risk).

The government also explicitly manipulated the rhetoric of nationalism as a term that referred to South Korea only; its first use of the word could be seen as ironic, since at that time the country was a state, not a nation.[124] These two historical events, the

---

[123] Jang-jip Ch'oe points out two important aspects: nationalism as a historical praxis and nationalism as an incomplete mission. Both are related to the colonial experience and the separation between North and South. See *Han'guk minjokjuŭi ŭi chogŏn gwa chŏnmang* [*The Condition and the Future of Korean Nationalism*], (Seoul: Nanam, 1995).

[124] Benedict Anderson includes a most instructive discussion of "official nationalism" in *Imagined Community: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York: Verso, 1983). He

occupation and the civil war, have never been allowed to fade away; rather, they continue to haunt the everyday lives of Koreans. In turn, Koreans have made the issue of nationalism about far more than ideology.

Korean nationalism has also been systematically augmented through government propaganda, the national history curriculum, and commemorative events. Under the warlike conditions of the 1960s and 1970s, the concept and rhetoric of nationalism were successfully utilized to discourage public belief in alternative governmentalities.[125] Nonetheless, nationalism remained appealing because South Korea's economic success continued under its policies and because it was often used to create a sense of patriotic unity among activists, students, and liberal intellectuals in response to the Japanese occupation, the separation between North and South, and a succession of military governments. In this sense, Korean nationalism is understood to supply a theoretical framework to activists as well as an inspiration to people in pursuit of something that is lacking from their lives.

Both complex and highly popular, Korean nationalism today is advocated by government, elites, and conservatives as well as by activists, civilians, and progressives. It is so ubiquitous and so central that it almost seems to function like a phantom, an unseen but conscious regulator of daily life and organization. Nationalism has not only

---

also mentions that in both Korea and China, nationalist discourse remained extremely state-centered. See *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1997).

[125] Craig Calhoun writes: "too often the pressure for national unity became a pressure for conformity even in private life." See *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1997): 79.

"become[s] the religious surrogate of modernity" in South Korea,[126] it has grown beyond the status of myth or ideology into a moral imperative that Koreans must adhere to and respect.[127]

The nature of the nationalistic excitement and passion that was hyped during the 2002 World Cup is better understood when it is considered against the backdrop of South Korea's inherent nationalism as well as the country's recent economic crisis (the IMF intervention, 1997-2000).[128] The 2002 World Cup became the perfect arena for all of South Korea—government and citizens alike—to rebound from the national depression that had resulted from the IMF crisis. By hosting the World Cup successfully, the government could claim South Korea's readiness to reenter the global arena. For their part, everyday Koreans were driven to a new level of national fanaticism by the Korean team's victories. Throughout the country, all Korean mass media were filled with World Cup news; everyday life seemed to be saturated with the event. Mass public rallies became outlets for the expression of genuine national confidence, joy, and unity; at the same time, these shrewdly orchestrated events showed off the reemerging South Korea to the world.

The interpolation of performance theory into analyses of this event increases comprehension of its cultural aspects, emotive planes, and voluntary elements. In using a performance model to look at social spectacles and spectatorship, I engage in a search

---

[126] Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 100.

[127] Ji-hyŏn Im, *Minjokjuŭi nŭn banyŏk ida* [*Nationalism is Betrayal*] (Seoul: Sonamu, 1999).

[128] See my Introduction chapter for detailed explanation.

for better scripts, for better understandings.[129] The process of defining the national response as a social performance provides a useful perspective on its intersection of global rhetoric and nationalist intent.

3. Performing Nationalism during the World Cup

Performing Nationalism: An interpretive tool

In my search for better scripts to describe the Korean national frenzy during the 2002 World Cup, I use a performance model to examine the social spectacle that took place in South Korea during the mass festive rallies of June and July 2002. This approach indicates that the phenomena in the mass festive rally were not a monolithic, stationary, one-time-only occurrence but rather sites them as evolving events closely tied to contemporary South Korean society and the prevalence of Korean nationalism within it.

Therefore, I look at how nation-ness was both performed and configured in the spectacle, using the term to "capture the idea of nation that links disparate phenomena such as nation, nationalism, and nationality."[130] The idea of nation-ness, however,

---

[129] Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, xi.

[130] To encompass concepts as disparate as nation, nationality and nationalism, Taylor develops the term

comprises "everything from the bureaucratic fact of citizenship to the nationalist's mythical construction of nation as an eternal entity."[131] By encompassing multi-dimensional aspects, nation-ness acknowledges "structures of feeling" in South Korea within which people perceived and materialized their nationalist sentiments during the World Cup.[132] In addition, the idea of nation-ness enables me to investigate diverse elements as a "set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension" and as "a social experience which is still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating."[133]

The ways that people inhabited their bodies and embodied their sense of nation-ness in the mass rally would be almost impossible to unravel without considering the performative characteristics of the spectacle itself. Reading the rally/spectacle as a performance provides innovative ways to explicate the multiple dimensions of nationalism embodied within it because such a reading sites performance as a "broad spectrum" or "continuum" of human actions that range from ritual, sports, popular

---

"nation-ness" which was originally coined by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Community*. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 92-93.

131 Ibid., 277.

132 I use the phrase of "structures of feeling" to explicate "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt." The term also pays attention to "the tension between the received interpretation and practical experience," and to a kind of feeling and thinking which is "social material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined." Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977): 130-132.

133 Ibid., 132.

entertainment, and everyday-life performances to media and the Internet.[134] I have chosen to focus on three dimensions of performance that manifested in the spectacle: as a set of evolving processes, as a betwixt-and-between, and in everyday life.

Approaching the 2002 World Cup phenomenon in South Korea as a set of evolving processes enables me to decipher the ways that nation-ness was experienced through a set of collective acts, rather than as a single act or series of single acts. According to Turner, ritual and performance include "the processual sense of 'bringing to completion' [and/or] 'accomplishing'…to perform is to complete an involved processes rather than to do a single deed or act."[135] The performative acts of citizens in the rally spanned reality and fiction, being and becoming, and present and future. Participants in this social performance rendered the event to be a "fantasized reality even while it realizes fantasy."[136] Six years after the World Cup, the implications of people's performances are neither determined nor reified; rather, the event's importance is still being reconstructed and imagined.

By labeling performances in the spectacle as "betwixt-and-between," I reference two implications. The first is collective rituals composed of individual performances. South Koreans who publicly gathered and cheered for the national team had a chance, however temporary, to experience collectivity or a sense of direct relation to others as

---

134 Schechner, *Performance Studies*.

135 Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982): 91.

136 Ibid., 121.

they presented themselves in the here and now.[137] However, as with "communitas," people could preserve individual distinctiveness even as they experienced this short-lived feeling of group solidarity.[138] In this mass rally human participants were represented by the emptiness at the center.[139] Despite the solidarity palpably experienced during all of the rallies, the participants were only loosely related to another, in a state of fragmentation as well as confluence that dissolved after the games or celebrations.

Social performances during the World Cup encompassed both "efficacy ritual" and "entertainment-theatre."[140] In public places, South Koreans expressed a considerable amount of serious, nationalist sentiment but at the same time simply entertained themselves, using the event as an excuse to act crazy and have fun with their families and friends. According to this interpretation, performance in the rallies was about being "oneself and to play at being others; to be in a trance and to be conscious."[141] Indeed, sport's tacit visceral physicality, dramatic uncertainty, and subjective interpellation render it a compelling and seductive aspect of popular existence for both spectators and

---

[137] Ibid., 48.

[138] Turner distinguishes three forms of communitas: spontaneous, ideological, and structural. Spontaneous communitas is a "direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities"; ideological communitas is a "set of theoretical concepts which attempt to describe the interactions of spontaneous communitas"; and normative (structure) communitas is a "subculture or group which attempts to foster and maintain relationships or spontaneous communitas on more or less permanent basis." Ibid., 45-49.

[139] Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

[140] According to Schechner, "performance comprehends the impulse to be serious and to entertain." Richard Schechner, *Ritual, Play and Performance* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977): 218.

[141] Turner, *Ritual to Theatre*, 122.

participants alike.[142] Of course an international sporting event can "function as a key element in the promotion of social cohesion, specifically, national cohesion, and the mobilization of the masses,"[143] but here Koreans were playing and amusing themselves rather than behaving in ways that were totally informed and enforced by political ideology and governmental propaganda.

Finally, I examine the role of performance in everyday life. The World Cup, like the Olympic Games, contains megagenres and metagenres of cultural performance: religious festivals, drama festivals, film festivals, arts festivals, and even culinary festivals, as well as combinations of these.[144] Thus the lines between audience and participants become blurred, and everything within the process becomes a performance. During the World Cup, nation-ness was widely materialized in the forms of national flags, placards, mottos, and chants, which constituted performative banality. Such performative banality also indicates that "[Nationalistic] habits are not removed from everyday life […] Daily, the nation is indicated, or 'flagging', in the lives of citizenry."[145] Furthermore, South Korea during the World Cup was both literally and symbolically projected as a national stage that would be observed by global spectators. Both the South Korean government and major corporations prepared showcase events to prove

---

[142] David Andrews, "Introduction: Playing with the Pleasure Principle," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 105.2 (2006): 269-276.

[143] Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith, eds. *The Olympics at the Millennium: Power, Politics and the Games* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000): 215.

[144] MacAloon, *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*.

[145] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London & Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995): 6.

that South Korea had successfully rebounded from the economic crisis of the late 1990s and was ready to be a global leader. South Korea's global visibility was persistently projected onto this national stage with oft-repeated slogans such as "The whole world is watching us."[146]

Understanding any spectacle is dependent on a complex scene of interface;[147] in this case, analyses of various performances within the rally as well as of Korean reactions—governmental, corporate, and public—are necessary in order to fully illustrate the characteristics of refashioned nation-ness that emerged. I discuss how South Koreans performed nation-ness at the event by narrativising the various elements of theatricality residing in the spectacle.

Scene #1: Presenting the National Stage to Global Spectators

Global rhetoric, as shown by mass-media slogans such as "The world is watching us," "We are preparing this event for the global citizens" and "We are now becoming global leaders," was ubiquitous and overwhelmingly salient in South Korea during the World Cup. However, it was also firmly grounded in nationalistic intent. I suggest that the World Cup was prepared for and presented in South Korea as a national stage, both symbolically and literally, to be seen by global spectators as well as domestic citizens. Within this process of national stage-making, a complex interplay of mirroring

---

146 Cho Han, 9.

147 Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*.

and masking operated. Citizens were encouraged to see themselves, in football events and the team's unusual victories, as proud Koreans with the power to rebound from the recent economic crisis (i.e. the IMF intervention). At the same time, they were required to internalize an imaginary gaze from outside Korea in a way that reminded them of how others (usually Westerners) saw and judged them. In this context, the consensual urge became unavoidable to mask the nation's image, both by concealing and altering it, into something that could appeal to the foreigners.

The overarching rubric of the staging, planned by the government and mass corporations and imposed by South Korean mass media, consisted of constant self-examination, on a personal level, as well as national self-examination that included domestic surveillance. But in practical terms, the 2002 World Cup was hyped as the perfect opportunity not only for the Korean football team to enhance its reputation by winning but also for South Korea to be seen as an attractive place for foreigners and global financial investors. As Horne and Manzenreiter write, for South Korea "the 2002 World Cup [was] the perfect vehicle for hastening recovery from the recession of 1997 and the subsequent economic restructuring imposed by the International Monetary Fund."[148] Therefore, almost all public discourse surrounding the World Cup was about redeeming the South Korea's reputation a leading Asian country, thereby healing the nation from the wounds it had sustained during the economic crisis.

---

[148] Horne and Manzenreiter, "Accounting for Mega-Events: Forecast and Actual Impacts of the 2002 Football World Cup Finals on the Host Countries Japan/Korea," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 39.2 (June 2004): 193.

As South Korean Deputy Prime Minister Nyŏm Jin claimed, hosting the World Cup was about "the brand-making of Korea, rather than making money directly."[149] Accordingly, discourse utilized by the news media prominently featured versions of "The world is watching us":

> The world began to see South Korea as an energetic nation that has the passion for mega-events. The global citizens began to realize that Korea managed to move on from a minute country in East Asia to a powerful nation running toward the center of the world. Korea has also become the "Pride of Asia."[150]

These statements demonstrate how South Koreans worked to stage their nation during an international mega-event and recognized the World (global citizens) as its spectators while doing so. The motivation for this effort was people's desire to advance their nation-state as one of the leading countries in global society; two of its objectives were to redeem South Korean national pride and to promote it to the rest of the world. The self-congratulatory rhetoric of the above statement functions as a symbolic mirror that invites readers to recognize themselves as resolute, competent and powerful citizens.

The popular catch-phrase "Pride of Asia" further implies South Korea's intricate, multi-layered status, along the global spectrum as well as within the Asian region, and also invokes its complex, sensitive relationship with Japan, the games' co-host. First introduced by South Korean supporters in a card section during one of the Korean team's

---

149 *Newsweek*, 17 June 2002.

150 *Hangyŏre sinmun*, 27 June 2002.

matches (Figure 4.1), upon analysis the phrase is quite ambivalent. Apparently, its significance lauds the alternative regional (Asian) energy that counteracts global (Western) hegemony (by holding the World Cup in the region, rather than Europe or Latin America). However, the phrase could also refer to South Korea's national desire to become a sub-empire within the Asian region, especially by beating Japan—its former colonizer—either in individual games or in the final standing.

Fig 4.1 A card section, "Pride of Asia," presented by the South Korean team supporters and the Red Devils. (Courtesy of Naver search engine and the Korean Football Association).

The promising, celebratory aspect of the joint Korea-Japan hosting was present from the games' initiation, according to a statement generated by the Korean Football Association for the 2002 World Cup:

> Korea and Japan, very close but also very far, the two countries who used to be in tension, now hand in hand, deliver a message of peace to the rest of the world. As one of the mega-sporting events in this global village, the 2002 World Cup opens the 21st Century—this time, it's neither in Europe nor in Latin America, but first time in Asia where we send this

message of peace through foot ball to the whole wide world.[151]

However, when presented with this positive view of the co-hosting as both a goodwill gesture and an opportunity to improve relations with Japan, most Koreans would firmly desire to conquer their former colonizer, in sport, under the spotlight of the global stage. For South Korea as a whole, an event closely involved with Japan (especially when watched by global spectators) would almost always be seen as a chance to remedy its past national humility by overcoming Japan and performing better in every circumstance.[152]

More important, as one of the leading Asian countries, South Korea's victory over Japan in the event, as well as its unprecedented winning of the World Cup itself, was inspiring and encouraging enough for South Koreans to feel confident about venturing onto the global stage—under a self-laudatory banner highlighting South Korea as the "Pride of Asia." For South Korea in this particular context, "Asia" becomes its launching pad to global status (the "West") where the notion of Asia could in turn become a euphemism for unity or solidarity.

In order to physically accommodate such national confidence in the face of global spectatorship, the South Korean government and corporate sponsors constructed performance stages and installed giant screens in public spaces such as Seoul City Plaza and invited citizens onto these fields of performance. As the national stage was

---

[151] *The Dreams Come True* [*Kkum ŭn iruwoe jinda*], DVD, dir. Korean Football Association, KBS Media, South Korea, 2002.

[152] Early in the 2002 World Cup competition, I remember a lot of South Koreans (including some of my friends and relatives) saying that they would not be too upset if the Korean team didn't perform as expected, but that being outscored by the Japanese team would be unbearable.

promoted at home as well as to the world audience, spectacular programs and domestic celebrity appearances were scheduled and advertised on public networks and in newspapers along with the national team's surprising victories. These live pre-game shows, which were broadcast via every South Korean TV station,[153] throughout the nation, before every Korean team match, overtly targeted a wide age range with young stars and middle-aged celebrities whose repertoires consisted of such songs as "*Daehan gŏna* [The Sons of Great Han Nation]," and "*A, Daehanminguk* [Ah, Korea]." The lyrics and patriotic, uplifting melodies expessed the desire for Korea's rebound and global advancement, to be realized (symbolically) via this sporting event. In almost every performance during this nationwide celebration, *Ah, Korea* was introduced and used as a representative medium for citizens' self-praise and the nation's glorification. Celebrities, supporters and citizens sang in unison:

> You can get anything you want
> You can be anything you desire
> Thus we sing for this honorable land
> Like this, we sing for our beautiful landscapes [….]
> Tall skyscrapers in City sites, Fertile soils in the countryside
> People freely living in harmony—
> All our dreams incessantly reaching out to the world.
> Our Korea! Ah! Our Fatherland

153 For example, on 22 June 2002 a live pregame show titled *World Cup Final Eight Special, O Victorious Korea* was performed at Seoul City Plaza before and after the match and was aired by Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC).

Ah! We will love this land forever![154]

Overtly patriotic songs, fireworks and flamboyant set designs were fully employed to celebrate the national team's victory and keep people in high spirits. Such performances came to be understood as reflections or epitomized pictures that represented the kinds of images people wished to circulate among themselves as well as to display to the world.

However, beneath the mechanisms that encouraged and enabled citizens to show and embody national pride, a contradictory force moved them to alter or accommodate themselves under a mask that was meant to satisfy an imagined global gaze. Criticizing such mobilized spontaneity, critic Myŏng-wu Noh writes about how the corporate sponsors and media mobilized citizens through the spectacle of this national stage in order to capture a unified image of the nation:

> [T]he citizens were mobilized by the spectacle which the media had provided. At the Seoul City Plaza, SK Telecom, who happens to be the greatest beneficiary of this World Cup event, shoot their advertisement. Using the theme of this World Cup and the Red Devils, one of the staff members announced: "We are now going to shoot an ad. Those of you who are not wearing the red T-shirt sponsored by SK Telecom, please leave this plaza." [….] Also, the media continuously reported a message saying that "The World is watching Korea." Such a message worked as a

[154] Lyrics, "Ah, Korea," Homepage; available from http://guno.pe.kr/html/04hissongs/songs8_152.htm; Internet; accessed 11 November 2007.

> surveillance device to have the citizens keep up with their self-screening.[155]

The media highlighted the Korean team's success, along with millions of Koreans supporting their team on the national stage, as proof of the Korean national capacity for success and competence in global competition. Korean media emphasized such statements from the foreign press as, "The world is stunned by the Korean team as well as by [the support shown by the citizens and the Red Devils'] performance on the national stage."[156]

To accommodate such an imagined global gaze, the South Korean government and domestic media corporations also launched self-improvement campaigns prior to the 2002 World Cup. As a part of this national image-making project, the campaign aimed to both change and enhance the existing culture (people's ability to speak foreign languages, especially English, social mannerisms, etc.) and the urban atmosphere (sanitary conditions, overall cleanliness, etc.). One remarkable example was "The Global Etiquette Era" series published in *Chosun Ilbo*, a mainstream newspaper in South Korea. The series, which comprised a total of 1,080 articles and ran between 9 December 1998 and 30 May 2002 (the day before the World Cup opening ceremony), consisted of citizens' personal stories accompanied by opinions about "how other fellow South Koreans should behave" in everyday situations. Each anecdote about indecent behavior(s) witnessed and/or experienced by the writer was meant to correct Koreans

---

[155] Myŏng-wu Noh, "*Saeroun kunjung ŭi ch'ul hyŏn*" [The Emergence of a New Mass], *Munhwa Gwahak*, no. 31 (2002): 205-6.

who had displayed bad etiquette. Their ultimate purpose was to inform readers about proper manners and how to perform them, especially on behalf the foreigners who were expected to visit South Korea for the World Cup games. A typical example concerned a woman honking her car horn too loudly and for too long. After citizens in general are advised not to follow this example, the writer concludes: "I think it is very rude to disturb the foreign visitors with the honking noise in the middle of the night—it will do a big damage to Korea's reputation, known as the 'peaceful land of the morning calm.'"[157]

Another civilian writer shares his experience while traveling in London:

> One day, I was waiting for a bus. A foreign person approached me and asked for the London downtown directions. I told the person that I couldn't really help her because I also was a newcomer. Others who were nearby had heard our short conversation, and although it was a busy morning rush-hour, kindly advised the foreign person with the bus directions. One young passenger even offered her the bus fare. For Londoners, kindness exists as a basic etiquette, and I also witnessed how this was not something rare. Ordinary citizens were all global gentlemen. The number of foreign visitors entering South Korea is increasing with the dawning of the World Cup. They say it is so hard to ask for help in South Korea. We should try to be more

---

156 *Tonga Ilbo*, 12 June 2002.

157 Gŭi-bok Yi, *Chosun Ilbo*, 3 April 2002.

understanding and kind to the foreign visitors.[158]

The reasoning behind this story reveals that the ultimate reference points for all the suggested guidelines in the etiquette series come from the advanced Western countries. Because the idea of the "West" is conflated with the very notion of the "global," the term "global" itself has been understood as a successful cultural symbol of the "West." Thus, the word "London" in this context becomes a desirable signifier that South Koreans should imitate in order to succeed.

In addition, both the intent and execution of the etiquette series show how the project revolves around two contradictory desires within South Koreans: on the one hand, to become global citizens (exemplified by the Londoners above), and on the other to reinforce nationalistic agency, end their "First World Complex," and take pride in themselves as they enhance "their" ways of living.[159] At this crossroads of self-hate and self-love, the main argument in almost every article can be summarized as: "If we impress the foreigners with a kind image, we could reconstruct Korea as the first-rate nation in the world."[160] This dual image of shame and patriotism is the result of a mindset justifies both the inferiority and superiority of existing customs and Korean identity.

In South Korea, now as in 2002, another accepted standard of exemplary, world-class citizenship is the ability to speak foreign languages (mainly English). This is clearly different from the prevalent attitude in Japan in 2002; 70 % of its World Cup

---

158 Sang-mun Yi, *Chosun Ilbo*, 20 May 2002.

159 *Chosun Ilbo*, 31 May 2002.

volunteers were fluent in a second language, compared to 95 % of the South Korean volunteers.[161] It can be assumed that Korea's World Cup organizing committee deliberately selected official volunteers who could already speak foreign languages; however, in South Korea the imperative to become a "global" person is prompted largely by nationalistic sentiments. Haruo Nogawa writes how South Korean volunteers "revealed a more serious approach to the World Cup in general," and how they "appeared to express much stronger nationalism and localism than their Japanese counterparts who appeared to be leaning more toward individualism, hedonistic attitudes and momentary pleasure."[162]

Cleaning the national stage after supporters' public performances was hyped, and presented, as another spectacle that promoted global standards on the national stage. After the Korean team's first game, the Seoul city squares and streets (upon which the national stage had been literally constructed) were filled with trash. After the second game, citizens participated in clearing up the litter. In fact, these efforts were directly organized by the Red Devils, prompted by media criticism of the messy areas that might spoil the image of the national stage. Major South Korean newspapers such as *Tonga Ilbo* reported citizen concern: "Several middle-school students cleaned the littered streets until late at night, one of the students said 'We felt the need to clean up the streets after

---

160 Ibid.

161 Haruo Nogawa, "An international comparison of the motivations and experiences of volunteers at the 2002 World Cup," *Football Goes East*, 228.

162 Ibid., 235.

the tournament; we need to do this for the sake of the Korean team and its victory.'"[163] In addition, the media constantly reminded people that the look of messy streets after the games might taint the global fame of the national stage, newly earned during the World Cup.

Thus the Red Devils and South Korean citizens encouraged one another to clean up the streets after each game and to treat the streets as an additional venue for completing the mission of their national stage. The linkage of these concepts demonstrates that the physical act of cleaning was an enactment of nationalism, prompted by the global gaze that also functioned as an internalized censoring device. The motivation behind the cleaning process had little to do with increasing social consciousness or civic ethics; rather, by promoting and participating in the street cleanings, citizens embodied a nationalism that was symbiotic with their global desires and disciplined by the global gaze.

This analysis of how the South Korean national stage was presented to global audiences during the 2002 World Cup illustrates the reciprocal relationship between nationalism and globalism in South Korea. Globalism was deployed as rhetoric to mobilize national desires, while at the same time the national stage, along with the performative activity of Koreans, were presented as proofs of the ability to achieve global success.

---

163 *Tonga Ilbo*, 12 June 2002.

Scene #2: Nationalism as Cultural Creativity and Practice

Analysis of the Korean reaction to the 2002 World Cup—governmental, corporate, and public—shows that it illustrates the characteristics of refashioned nationalism in three ways: how Koreans practiced and dramatized nationalism through their various ways of supporting the national team, how they utilized the national passion to reveal their individual identities, and how their global desire and their nationalism intersected on this stage. In their performances, nationalism was transformed and even rendered banal, under the premise that supporters' performances contributed to altering and even multiplying notions of nationalism.

A unique element of the public performances surrounding the World Cup was that South Korean supporters of the national team, especially adolescent girls, adorned themselves with the South Korean national flag, one of the most representative symbols of national ideology. In South Korea particularly, the flag has functioned as a solemn symbol of the nation-state to which people must pay their respects, a duty constantly taught in school and reinforced by society in general. However, this new use demonstrated that people were now able to transform this sacred national icon into a fashionable trend and use it to express individual tastes and styles—literally, to "unflag" it. As a result, the flag was transformed into personal, self-expressive costumes, as decoration or even by being fashioned into hoods, revealing tank tops, capes, and miniskirts. As Hye-joang Cho Han writes:

> Going against the parents' "nationalistic" hope that there is a sense of

patriotism embedded in their daughter's flag-costume, this daughter might have been only interested in expressing her stylish taste. She might have been unconsciously planning on freely "enjoying" her night out (without having to provide any forms of excuse) with the national flag covering her body.[164]

Fig 4.2 Teenage "Red Devil" girls dressed in national flags. Photo by author, 2002.

Figure 4.2 shows four teenage girls on a subway platform, presumably heading toward the Seoul City Hall Plaza where citizens congregated to cheer for the Korean national team on game days. The image shows how at least one was trying to show off

[164] Hye-joang Cho Han, "*P'ip'a ŭi Woldŭkŏp ŭl nŏmŏsŏ*" [*Beyond FIFA's World Cup*], *Dangdae*, no. 20 (September 2002): 41.

her sexuality, generally restricted and suppressed by social norms. The national flags wrapped around the girls' bodies seem to function as a "proud excuse" to wear off-the-shoulder shirts (red, of course) and miniskirts, and to stay bare-legged.

Conversion of the national flag into costume can be seen as an example of banal nationalism.[165] By using the flag as a fashion accessory instead of waving it, Korean supporters performed a personal expression of nationalism that is clearly less solemn and collectivist than traditional forms and expressions.

Another practice of nationalism during the World Cup involved transforming nationalist mottos into chants for the national team. South Korean supporters who gathered in public squares and streets shouted and sang several such chants, relentlessly and passionately. Two of the most popular were *Daehanminguk* [Citizens of the Great Han Nation] and *O, pilsŭng Korea* [Oh, Victorious Korea]. These two nationalistic slogans were relentlessly repeated and performed—on TV and in commercials, at the rally, and at celebrations after the games. As they played with the literal meanings of these chants and repeated them, sometimes for hours, Koreans enjoyed consuming such signifiers (greatness and victory) rather than only privileging the glorification of the significators (citizenry and nation), as tradition dictated. The sense of nation-ness, therefore, was "produced and constructed through performative enunciation and collective activity, the set of behaviors crystallized around the chanting."[166]

---

[165] Minna Aslama & Mervi Pantti write: "Banal nationalism involves the ongoing circulation and the use of symbols, themes, rituals, and stereotypes of the nation." In "Flagging Finnishness: Reproducing National Identity in Reality Television," *Television & New Media*, 8.1(2007): 49-67.

[166] Ueno, 120. Ueno comments that the national element in the performative act is not constituted as mere

It is worthwhile to point out that the tension between spontaneity and mobilization during these cheering sessions reflected contradictory aspects of this new form of nationalism. Citizen participation in the rallies was apparently voluntary; however, spaces for these gatherings were made available by the South Korean government and the rallies were promoted by the major domestic corporations. Careful advance planning included two TV commercial series by team sponsor SK Telecom, containing detailed instructions on how to clap *Daehanminguk* and how to sing *O, pilsŭng Korea*, that were aired two months prior to the games.

These commercials feature Sŏk-kyu Han, a Korean film actor renowned for his iconic image as a comfortable, easygoing character (his general popularity and starring role in these commercials greatly contributed to the promotion of Korean football). Han's appearance helped make the acts of cheering and chanting not only positive (i.e., patriotic) but also into acts that were desirable to imitate and pursue. In the first commercial in the "How to clap *Daehanminguk*" series, we see Han in a red T-shirt, stating that he has also become one of the Red Devils, the official supporting organization of the Korean national football team. Standing at center-stage in front of a group of thousands of Red Devils, all dressed up in their red uniforms, Han wears his friendly, inviting smile as he instructs and teaches the clapping/chanting motions, directly addressing the viewers (Figure 4.3).

---

identification with any a priori ideology (2004).

Fig 4.3 Popular film star Sŏk-kyu Han in a TV commercial, teaching citizens "How to Clap 'Daehanminguk.'"[167] Video still courtesy of TVCF, 2007.

167 *Red Devil Clapping* (SK Telecom, 2002), 32 sec.; from TVCF, WMV, http://www.tvcf.co.kr/CfKorea/MediaView/CmKoViewPrem.asp?code=2455cmko&ADZINESPCBANK= (accessed 10 November 2007).

Han says: "Red Devil chanting, please follow my motions. First, clap five times. [*Red Devils clap five times, then shout Daehanminguk*] Stretch out your hands! The power of Korean Football, Red Devil Speed 011 is with you."

The cheering and chanting motions demonstrated by Han as well as countless young Red Devils in the background symbolized South Korea as a dynamic, powerful nation filled with young blood. In particular, the motion of stretching out the arms signified a masculine gesture that expressed citizens' desire for their national team's victory as well as their nation's advancement. The background sound of people repeating the slogan in unison, all dressed in the same uniform, also showed off the nation's solidarity.

SK Telecom aired the second commercial shortly after the first. Again, Han is seen instructing the viewers on how to sing the supporting song against a notably livelier background, with more Red Devils making dynamic, unilateral movements in identical uniforms and singing *O, pilsŭng Korea* [O, Victorious Korea] (Figure 4.4). As the leader of this massive supporting group of Red Devils, Han confidently narrates:

> Now this time, it's the song. Red Devil cheering song, please follow us. Stretch out your arms. [*Red Devils sing and do their motions in unison.*] Louder! [*Red Devils continue their singing.*] The power of Korean Football, Red Devil Speed 011 is with you.

Fig 4.4 Performing as the leader of Red Devils, Han teaches viewers how to sing "*O pilsŭng Korea*."[168] Video still courtesy of TVCF, 2007.

168 *Let's Learn the Cheering Song* (SK Telecom, 2002), 29 sec.; from TVCF, WMV, http://www.tvcf.co.kr/CfKorea/MediaView/CmKoViewPrem.asp?code=2456cmko&ADZINESPCBANK= (accessed 10 November 2007).

Of course, it would be unfair to insist that these examples prove both supporters and citizens were entirely mobilized and manipulated by governmental and commercial propaganda. On the contrary, many citizens freely utilized these chants and cheering motions to have fun rather than to intensify their sense of nationalism.

Fig 4.5 Graffiti, "We are Korea [*Daehanminguk*]," inside the underground arcade in *Kwanghwamun*, downtown Seoul. Photo by author, 2006.[169]

By transforming traditionally serious expressions of nationalism, people's performances exemplified their prior banality (in the sense of conformist repetition rather than insignificance or dullness). The banners and slogans displayed on the streets and the mottos reiterated through the mouths of the people all pronounced a nationalist ideology (Figure 4.5). But at the same time, people's performances transformed traditionally serious expressions of nationalism into something that they could playfully manipulate, with a sense of jocularity.

---

169 This wall is decorated with citizens' graffiti that encourages and wishes for the Korean team's victory. Public displays of such slogans with their hyped nationalist undertones became another outlet for citizens to express their emotions and creativity.

These national team supporters' performances infused transitional, temporal, and fleeting experiences into their nationalism. Moreover, as the popularity and omnipresence of nationalism took on innovative forms beyond the traditional modes of political and ideological propaganda, nationalism became banalized within the performances.

Scene #3: Nationalism as Individual Revelation

During the 2002 World Cup, while South Korean supporters fully expressed their excitement in unison at public rallies, they (like the girls in revealing clothing) also individually and voluntarily used these experiences to increase self-understanding and inhabit a more complex version of self that often transcended the quotidian. The national frenzy of these performative acts not only revealed individual identities but was also intertwined with personal desires. On an individual level, the intersections of Koreans' roles as both spectators and participants produced alternative versions of nationalism that harmoniously combined national goals with personal desires.

Whether or not South Korean supporters' enthusiasm was mobilized by government and corporations to the level of national frenzy, and if so to what degree, is still a matter of debate. South Korean researchers have tried to quantify whether participation was voluntary, what roles were played by government and commercial

forces, and how central nationalism was to the entire event.[170] Although, given the international nature of the competition and the miraculous success of the Korean team, it is easy to assume that nationalism was an effective motivator and organizing principle, in reality it became almost impossible for any Korean to escape the World Cup due to its constant presence in mass media broadcasts, street displays, and daily conversations. Therefore, it seems clear that nationalism continued to function as a forceful mobilization tool.

However, it is also important to note that the national frenzy was not entirely organized by the government, as was traditional. Jin-wung Jung described South Korean citizen participation in 2002 World Cup events as a "voluntary mobilization"[171] wherein the government and domestic corporations attempted to promote nationalism for their own purposes among a citizenry eager to respond.

I believe that Korean supporters of the South Korean national team during the 2002 World Cup were not manipulated by nationalism but rather able to use their sense of nationalism to discover their own agency and individuality. Hye-joang Cho Han also claims that "[the supporters' performance in this rally] should be read as an effort to change the ordinary space into something special, a time/space where they [the youth, women] could perform and prove how much they are in love with themselves."[172]

---

[170] Hye-joang Cho Han, Jin-wung Jŏng, Hyŏk-bŏm Kwon, Myŏng-wu Noh and Dong-yŏn Yi, et al.

[171] Jin-wung Jŏng, "'*Bulgŭn mulgyŏl hyŏnsang ŭl tonghaebon yokmang ŭi munhwa jŏngch'ihak*" [Reading the 'Red Flow' during the 2002 World Cup: Cultural Politics of Desire], *Dangdae*, no. 20 (September 2002): 8-23.

[172] Cho Han, "*P'ip'a ŭi Wŏldŭkŏp ŭl nŏmŏsŏ*" [Beyond FIFA's World Cup], 37.

Women and teens, who are generally marginalized in South Korean society, were especially able to find opportunities—albeit temporary—to become visible and let their voices be heard. In his examination of disruptions in the traditional relationship between the female body and the male gaze during the 2002 World Cup, Wolfram Manzenreiter writes:

> Apart from the "staged spontaneity" in the national interest and mass effects, [South Korean female supporters'] motivations were less ignited by the love of the beautiful game than by the adoration of cute and handsome players. [...] For the first time in Asian history, it seems that a generation of women has emerged which is in the position to act upon the definition of dominant concepts of masculinity and to impose role models on their male contemporaries.[173]

These women, normally second-class citizens, used the stage provided by this soccer tournament as a place to encounter moments during which they could perform roles different from the ones that could be experienced in their everyday lives. Through this role-changing experience, some were able to find a different, richer version of self. It is interesting to note how one female South Korean professor expresses the excitement she felt as a woman participating in the supporting event:

> When would I, a woman, have had such a great time in my own country,

---

[173] Wolfram Manzenreiter, "Her place in the 'House of Football': Globalization, cultural sexism and women's football in East Asian societies," in *Football Goes East: Business, culture and the people's game in China, Japan and South Korea,* ed. Wolfram Manzenreiter and John Horne (New York: Routledge, 2004).

> screaming legitimately in public, like crazy? At a place like Seoul City Hall Plaza? Even under the protection of police officers? I personally thank the World Cup event although some say it may just be a pure commercialism. It is because the event provided a public space where South Korean women could freely and legitimately express their long-repressed passion and desire.[174]

Of course, the fact that some women found a renewed sense of identity and a new sense of freedom during World Cup events does not mean that women's liberation has been achieved in South Korean society. In general, Korean women are still bound by cultural discourses regarding their capabilities, reproductive duties, and domestic responsibilities. As Hyŏk-bŏm Kwon points out, the World Cup itself was largely celebrated according to masculinist ideology, demonstrated by the prevalence of slogans referring to the national team such as *Daehan gŏna* [The Sons of Great Han Nation].[175] He also writes that "during the World Cup, there were no women; women existed only as cheerleaders on the streets and the football fields."[176]

---

174 Hyŏn Kyŏng, "*Yŏsŏngdo dangdanghan juch'e*" [Women as Rightful Subjects/Changing Authority, conformity into Equality and Peace], *Hangyŏre sinmun*, 3 July 2002.

175 Hyŏk-bŏm Kwon, "World Cup '*Kukmin ch'ukje,' dongnip jŏk jisŏng ŭn ŏdi e itnŭnka*" [South Korea, sucked into the black hole of the World Cup, the 'Kukmin Festival'], *Dangdae*, no. 20 (September 2002): 76. He also suggests that such masculinist code gets easily combined with the Confucian familism existing in Korean society and thus labels the women, once again, as a submissive "other."

176 Ibid.

While I do not agree that the 2002 World Cup phenomena improved Korean women's overall social status or suddenly transformed them into powerful beings, I would like to note that the event certainly created an atmosphere, even if temporary, where women could (at least) experience a role change through their own, spontaneous performance. Under the pretext of joining the national rallies, female bodies that had been constrained within the patriarchy and traditional sociocultural conventions found an outlet for personal physical sensation and pleasure.[177]

Similarly, identifying personal desire with the nation-state or national goals emerged as a common trend in South Korean social discourse during the 2002 World Cup. National dreams such as the victory of the Korean team and the advancement of South Korea as a "first-class" nation became goals that supporters could transpose onto their own personal desires. By collectively shouting such popular mottos as "The dreams come true," supporters simultaneously expressed individual dreams and identified with national ones. A few days after the World Cup, ad copy equated individual citizenship with the national:

> The World Cup is over.
>
> Forty-seven million citizens made it into the World Cup semi-finals.
>
> We made our dream come true.
>
> We are proud of our players.

---

[177] Hyun-mee Kim (Hyŏn-mi Kim) evaluates such female fandom as a harmonious combination of sexual desire and neopatriotism. See *Globŏl sidae ŭi munhwa bŏnyŏk* [*Cultural Translation in a Global* Era], (Seoul: Tto hana ŭi munhwa, 2005).

We are proud of ourselves [*kukmin*, citizens].

[….]

Now it is time for us to try harder

to fulfill the dream each of us have.

Korea's dream will come true

only when you realize your own dream.[178]

This ad is an example of nationalist rhetoric in which each citizen's dreams are cited as equivalent or even prerequisite to the nation's goals. Such rhetoric acknowledges personal autonomy by encouraging citizens to "fulfill their individual dream" yet also involves them in national goals through its assumption that readers will naturally equate their own dreams with those of the nation. The result is sanctioned reasoning wherein "you," an individual, realize a personal dream as part of, and in order to achieve, Korea's dream.

This reasoning was taken for granted during the 2002 World Cup, when every Korean was expected to wish for the Korean team's victory. The aforementioned motto "The Dreams Come True [*Kkum ŭn iruwoe jinda*]," originally a supporting-card display during a Korean match (Figure 4.6), became a popular phrase used by citizens when expressing their own personal goals and desires.

[178] From an advertisement in a magazine titled *Casa Living* (29 August 2002).

Fig 4.6 A card section that reads, "The Dreams Come True." (Courtesy of Naver search engine).

Exactly how this national dream and an individual's wishes for him or herself were expected to manifest varied: teenagers might dream of studying hard and entering a good university whereas the personal goal for adult men might have been to get a promotion at work. Still, whatever the specifics might be, nationalism was retooled so that individual self-understanding, cultivation of a renewed identity, and self-improvement were considered as important as the realization of national dreams—to which, in turn, successful realization of individual dreams was recognized as a primary contributor. Self-discovery among ordinary citizens was praised as the result of their individual performances, which were strongly mediated and driven by nationalist desires. Perhaps most significantly, this powerful mediation was both offered and received not only as a natural interaction between government and citizen but also as something natural for the citizen to experience and possess.

4. Epilogue: Memories from Summer 2002

As the result of 2002 World Cup phenomenon, public places such as Seoul's streets and squares became thresholds for all kinds of possibilities and changes. After the games and ceremonies ended, Koreans would return to their homes and resume their everyday lives. Nonetheless, memories of their physical experiences and performances in the rally would not only survive, they would provide a space and source of possibility from which to elicit emotional empowerment.

Since the end of the summer festival, in July 2002, there has been much talk about "how to carry on the fever" in South Korea.[179] (In many ways, South Korea has tried to continue and extend its national success in terms of both victory and global attention.) As a way of understanding the national fervor and people's experiences during the World Cup, I have interpreted the mass festive rally as a form of social performance. Attention to the performative aspects of the event(s) contributes to illuminating the World Cup phenomenon as a set of evolving processes that are closely tied to contemporary South Korean society. The elements of theatricality residing in this performance can be seen as a mechanism of communication activated by citizens' national desires as well as the expression of a system that forges and transforms such desires. Through analyzing South Koreans' performance in the World Cup, this project shows how people actualized

[179] Cho Han, 12.

and reconfigured their sense of national identity and explains how personal dreams became conflated with the nation's desire for global visibility.

As a way of concluding, I call attention to two characteristics of the nation-ness that was performed in the spectacle: one is an alliance between nationalism and individual identities, and the other is the intersection between nationalism and globalism.

On the one hand, nation-ness—comprising nation-state, nationalism and nationality—was materialized as cultural practices and utilized for individual revelation rather than functioning only as ideological propaganda. Although South Koreans expressed their nationalistic passion by wearing the national flag and chanting nationalist mottos, these ways of exercising nation-ness in their performances became largely banalized. Refashioning or "unflagging" national flags epitomized the altered characteristics of nation-ness.[180] The unusual alliance between nationalism and individual identities during the World Cup made collective goals contingent on individual desires, and vice versa. Through participating in supporting events, people utilized nationalism as a way to reveal individual identities. Women in particular could enjoy and express their personal pleasure and subjectivities in public places through their performing. The performance made the identities of women as South Koreans vulnerable, or open to change; their experiences involved an indeterminacy or open-endedness as an unfinished, still-evolving, and ongoing present.[181] While many infused these temporal

---

[180] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*.

[181] Mikita Hoy, "Joyful Mayhem: Bakhtin, Football Songs, and the Carnivalesque," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 14 (1994): 289-304. Hoy compares the connections between Bakhtian carnival and the British football song.

or fleeting experiences into their nationalism, they also discovered their own agency as well as their female desires. While the national dream was being imposed on each Korean as a venue for fulfilling individual desires, the fulfillment of individual desires was linked to national success and global competitiveness.

On the other hand, the social performance in South Korea during the World Cup illustrated the process by which nationalism has been interwoven with globalism. Creating a Korean national stage for global spectators evinced the society's contradictory desires for both self-hate and self-love: while Koreans tried to reach global standards by altering their traditions and customs, they simultaneously advocated the national stage and the national frenzy enacted upon it as proofs of their global success. A performative feature of this study visualizes the complex and even contradictory assimilation of the national into the global constructed during the event. The performed rallies were showcases for how globalization taps into the local rhetoric of rebound, charged in this case by South Korea's inherent nationalism. This intertwined desire between globalism and nationalism demonstrated an alternative realignment of the Korean nation-ness that was inaugurated during the World Cup.

Because performance is an activity that both stores and shapes human experiences, participants' memories of the mass rallies will continue to be interpreted in numerous ways. Hae-joang Cho Han expects "its memory, even after it cools, to remain lodged somewhere in individuals' bodies and to bring about changes in individuals' lives";[182] I similarly believe that people's experiences and memories of the festive rally

[182] Cho Han, 21.

are neither homogeneous, stationary, nor a one-time-occurrence. Rather, as fragmented, floating, and energetic modes, they contain affective capacities and potential which can be mobilized at any given conjuncture. The spectacle of the World Cup was "in itself, neither good nor bad, neither liberating nor alienation"; its capability and value reside in "the complicated interaction between the spectacle frame, its contents and its sociocultural context."[183] I also believe that people's performances in this spectacle have never been completed or determined but instead remain inspiring until the "opportunity to explode once again into a form of energy that can transform another time and space" occurs.[184] For this reason, my interest in this phenomenon continues.

[183] Mac Aloon, *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*, 272.

[184] Cho Han, 21.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

1. Reappearance of the Ghost: *The Lost Empire* (2001) and *Hanbando* (Korean Peninsula, 2006)[185]

To conclude, I would like to return to the discussion about how Empress Myŏngsŏng reappeared in contemporary South Korean cultural scenes and to what extent Korea's national-global dynamics might be envisioned through her ghost, her death, and its representations. By reconfiguring the empress's death, specifically her "postdisappearance" in diverse cultural products, I argue that the concept of ghosting is visualization that continues to act upon perceived reality even as it transcends the boundaries of theatrical representations.[186]

Since the beginning of the new millennium, images of Empress Myŏngsŏng have been copied and recopied in a variety of popular media. The most exemplary cases are a 2001-2002 TV drama series titled *Myŏngsŏng Hwanghu* [Empress Myŏngsŏng], a 2001 music video titled *The Lost Empire*, a 2006 blockbuster film titled *Hanbando* [Korean

---

185 All video stills are from *The Lost Empire*, VCD, dir. Eŭn-t'aek Ch'a, GM Production, South Korea, 2001. Video still courtesy of GM production, 2007.; *Hanbando*, DVD, dir. Wu-sŏk Kang, CJ Entertainment, South Korea, 2006. Video still courtesy of CJ Entertainment, 2007.

186 Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: performing cultural memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003): 143.

Peninsula], and several TV commercials. The timing of some of these depictions of Empress Myŏngsŏng as a fictional figure was related to South Korea's hosting of the 2002 World Cup as well as to its envisioning of a new image in a global era. In particular, *Myŏngsŏng Hwanghu*, which aired from 9 May 2001 through 18 July 2002 on Korea Broadcasting System (KBS), was exactly scheduled to conclude the night before the World Cup and the production's rationale intentionally aimed at restoring the nation's failed past through reconstituting images of the empress. These re-emergences in popular culture raise questions about how domestic venues dramatize the death of the empress; what makes her ghost repeatedly enter and re-enter cultural scenes; and to what extent her death scenes forge images of both national identity and individual gender identity.

My analysis of how the empress haunts South Korean cultural scene as both a historical (real) and fictional character suggests that her figure not only surfaces in several genres of cultural products but also erases the boundary between such cultural productions and reality. Particularly, I demonstrate that the depictions of the empress's death in these productions is meant to resurrect the traditional image of glorious, self-sacrificing womanhood and elevate her death to the level of national reconstruction, a process that indicates a condensed form of global fetishism. The images of Empress Myŏngsŏng in contemporary South Korea culture symbolize a fixation on history and an elegant consumption of the past that defines archaic, traditional imagery as authentically Korean and conflates mythical ideas/objects of Korean-ness with the nation's goal of global success.

Of course, I do not intend to argue that the reconfiguration of the empress in these productions wholly represents contemporary South Korean social scene. However, the repetition of Korea's historical trauma through her body, and the ways in which the empress has become a common, popular, and emblematic media icon suggest that the process of constructing these representations is more than a mere source of entertainment. The "ghosting" of Empress Myŏngsŏng in these products is a visual representation of invented national fantasy and desire, combined with the sense of identity it imparts.[187] By analyzing the images of Empress Myŏngsŏng's death scenes in two recent South Korean cultural products, *The Lost Empire* and *Hanbando*, I suggest that these productions' promotions of the ghosting of Empress Myŏngsŏng work in tandem with how nationalistic reconstruction (vis-à-vis the influence of cultural globalization) manipulates the feminine.

Death Performance #1: The Lost Empire, Empress Myŏngsŏng Music Video

The music video envisages the character of Empress Myŏngsŏng not as the passive victim of Japanese assassination but rather as one who actively surrendered her life in the name of her nation's honor. By refashioning the murder scenario, the production highlights the queen as an embodiment of the nation's honor and a symbol of national consensus. Notwithstanding its dramatization of a bold, active queen, the text

[187] Ibid., 141-146.

also retrieves her as a victim, an embodiment of sacrifice, a martyr, and an example of pure motherhood. The figure of the empress in this production has been split into double destinies: she is both an active martyr and a sacrificed victim, the nation's stalwart heroine and a sentimental woman who sheds tears over her own tragic fate.

The ways that *The Lost Empire* visualizes Empress Myŏngsŏng's death and its dramatization of her after-death have both been derived from nationalistic impulses. The music video was produced in response to the popularity of the aforementioned TV drama series, *Myŏngsŏng Hwanghu* [Empress Myŏngsŏng]. Scheduled to conclude the night before the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup, the rationale of the production acknowledged Korea's new image-making process as the host of this global event. Inevitably, KBS's motivations for producing a historical drama based on Empress Myŏngsŏng were grounded in a nationalistic sensibility expressed through its desire to revisit that failed past and heal it through the reproduced image of the empress:

> It is crucial for us [KBS] to produce a new history-drama series that could help citizens revise and rejustify Korean history and national superiority. Until recently, historical dramas that were contaminated by the inherent Japanese colonial historiography misrepresented Korean history and distorted it into a shameful past. As one of the co-hosts of the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup, and as we are preparing to show the power of the nation to the world; it is now time for us to rebuild our historical

perspectives and become proud citizens.[188]

The sense of urgency about reconstituting South Korea's national identity and preeminence in the new millennium, on the eve of the international competition, called forth yet another spectacle of the brutal regicide and the ghost of Queen Min at a new critical moment in the nation's history. The popular TV drama's reworking of the empress's image into a sophisticated, daring, forward-looking figure worked symbiotically with the pervasive influence of South Korean nationalism.

As a condensed version of the TV drama, the music video has been a sensational hit, with an extraordinary extended narrative structure and running time of 11 minutes. The two productions' shared cast stars Mi-yŏn Yi, a popular female film star in South Korea; Su-mi Cho, an internationally recognized South Korean Western-style opera singer, delivers the feature song of the music video soundtrack, "If I Leave." As shown by the detail and coordination of these two productions in two different media, the revisualization and promotions of the ill-fated queen's significance is sophisticated and ornate.

This idealized image of the empress, accomplished through refined dramatization and fancy visual mechanisms, was chosen to establish this very icon as the symbol of Korea's national spirit and the splendor of its traditions. In the video, when the queen is about to be captured and killed, she is placed on a fine line between a bold, fearless martyr and a figure of pure and fragile womanhood—an ideal who might endure as the

---

[188] Korea Broadcasting System, 2001, "About Empress Myŏngsŏng and the Korean History Drama," Drama Empress Myŏngsŏng, http://www.kbs.co.kr/endprogram/drama/myungsung/about/plan/plan.html (accessed 12 July 2007).

nation's undying spirit. In this scene, the image of the queen as a dignified, brave defender of the nation and a beautiful, heartrending, pathetic woman simultaneously converge with and produce each other.

Viewers encounter a group of Japanese assassins and its leader (played by Jun-ho Hŏ) breaking into the queen's palace quarters. Disguised as one of her own servants, the queen sits silently albeit restlessly among her ladies in waiting. After demanding his prey, the Japanese leader slays an old servant who angrily tries to defend the queen. At the sight, the queen furiously breaks the tension by standing up in fury and screaming out: "I am the Mother of Chosŏn [*Naeka Chosŏn ŭi kukmoda*]!" To emphasize her declaration, the camera moves into a close-up of her face and the background music is muted. Much of the pathos stems from her facial expression, as tears fall from her beautiful, sad eyes and she speaks her last words.

The queen's utterance of the word "Mother" works as a crucial verbal device that grants her a dignified posture; it is only through this label that the queen is allowed to exert the power of her authority. On a different level, this same powerful, dignified title ("Mother") turns out to be a rather useful terminology that would not be too detrimental to the nation's existing masculine, patriarchal system. Likewise, the queen's seemingly authoritative performance shifts into a mode of sentimentality as viewers witness this once-stately woman turning into a miserable, pathetic victim. After the queen fully exposes her identity, the camera gradually tightens focus on her face, particularly eyes as they look straight back into her enemy's (Figure 5.1).

Fig 5.1 Empress Myŏngsŏng (Mi-yŏn Yi) confronts the Japanese assassin (top right) in the music video*The Lost Empire*.

A close-up of her disdainful and utterly sad expression is followed by a reverse-angle shot of the Japanese leader's vicious look; then their eyes lock. Although the queen is stabbed to death in the subsequent sequence, this mise-en-scène celebrates her ultimate victory by stressing her poised dignity as well as beautifying her demeanor throughout the encounter. However, the queen's fearless performance here is valid only under the following, contradictory conditions: She needs to perform the dignified, honorable state of the nation's motherhood ("I am the Mother of Chosŏn"), and also function as a grieving woman who has been sacrificed because this double-bind position would not be a direct threat to the already established masculine order in the society.

While the queen's sacrificial gesture, aligned with feminine virtue, becomes modified in the final sequence to appeal to contemporary South Korean audiences, the regicide, as the queen's sacrificial act on behalf of her people, is crystallized as an

emblem of pure, innocent womanhood. Her final onscreen lines secure her position as the pure, innocent savior of the nation, the one who grieves and guards the future of her land and its people: "The Lost Empire"/ If I leave clean & white/The country that I dreamed/Myŏngsŏng Hwanghu" (Figure 5.2).

Fig 5.2 The final credit of the music video, which reads: "The Lost Empire/If I leave Clean & White/ The Country that I dreamed/Empress Myŏngsŏng."

The reemerging figure of the empress from burning flames symbolizes for the viewer that the queen *lives*; the production concludes that the queen, the good Mother, has been sacrificed so that "we" may survive. Thus, under such a holy icon, the people should unite and dream of the eternal Korea. By visualizing the reincarnating figure of the queen, the ending graphically illustrates how her ghost remains eternal and how the nation regenerates under such a presence.

To be sure, the theme of the queen's reincarnation is hinted at throughout the video. As it begins, viewers encounter a portrait of Empress Myŏngsŏng (Figure 5.3)

Fig 5.3 A portrait shown at the opening of the music video, which reads "Empress Myŏngsŏng." The dates imply that the Empress (who actually died in 1895) has been reborn with this production (2001).

whose caption in Chinese characters reads "Myŏngsŏng Hwanghu (Empress Myŏngsŏng)" in bold, red letters. Above the letters, the dates "1896-01," suggest that the queen was reborn in 1896, even though she was assassinated in 1895; the year given for her death, 2001, is the date of the video's release. This reconstructed timeline indicates that this video's production conjures up and reimagines both the queen's death and post-death, according to the underlying idea that the queen is a source of (regeneration) reincarnation, survives despite her historical date of death, and still exists in her people's minds. Nonetheless, despite this representation of the queen as a source of her country's regeneration, her figure is tightly bound within a characterization of the grieving, sacrificed woman.

On one level, the video remolds her figure into a grieving spirit, the disquieted un-dead. In the closing scene, the queen's solemn, grim narration is voiced over the visualization, via still camera, of her figure re-emerging from the leaping flames: "I am

the Mother of Chosŏn. Although my body burned down to ashes, roaming around the earth, lonely, through winds and rain—how can one say this is the end of me?" The final caption, by associating the queen's mutilated body with the nation's failed past, attempts to stimulate contemporary domestic viewers' hope and desires to regain the nation's strengths and to leap into the status of a world-class nation—under the fanciful, beautiful image of the ill-fated, sacrificed, grieving mother of Chosŏn/Korea.

Death Performance #2: Hanbando (Korean Peninsula), the Ultimate "Korean-style Blockbuster"

Played by Su-yŏn Kang, the empress dramatized in the film *Hanbando* is closer to a loyal warrior who grandly sacrifices her life for her country. Motivated by the nationalist intention of reclaiming Korea's once-failed history, director Wu-sŏk Kang's filmic representations in *Hanbando* overemphasize Empress Myŏngsŏng as the heroic signifier of Korea. Here, the spectacle of the queen's grand death performance has been recreated so that viewers may see her vivid, sublime martyrdom being conflated with the Korean national body. However, women are not actually present behind the film's grotesque representation of the queen: in this particular scene, clothed in extravagant royal attire, her body is invoked by a process of re-masculinization linked to the desire for national development. Through the ambivalent presentation of the queen's body (both as a woman and a warrior), the male characters in *Hanbando* mend their ruined history and pursue their patriotic dream of Korea's success and re-unification. The idealized feminine, symbolized by the figure of queen, merely accommodates and

nurtures the projection of this "masculine" version of femininity, or "patriarchy in drag."[189] This nationalistically expressed theme is synonymous with legitimization of the film's extremely macho production style.

In order to stand out as a "Korean-style blockbuster," *Hanbando* attempts to recreate or even fantasize historical traumas. Director Kang clearly expresses how he finds Korean history an artistic as well as filmic resource and mentions that filmic representation of historical traumas or incidents is essential to a successful "Korean-style blockbuster" because it resorts to "uniquely Korean sentiment" that secures audience attention[190] amidst the flow of Hollywood movies. Kang's imagined sense of unique Korean-ness, which is inevitably rooted in his belief that Korean historical past is something extraordinary, is similar to the rationales held by the artistic producers of the previous chapters; all are well linked to an obsession with the nation's global success.

In *Hanbando*, the invocation of the past serves as consolation to the present domestic audiences that all will be well. Indeed, the director juxtaposes a century-old incident (the Japanese assassination of Queen Min and the fall of Chosŏn) onto an imaginary, fictional present where Japan anxiously interferes with South Korea's imminent reunification. The fictional plot centers on a Japanese governmental claim to North and South Korea, starting with the rights to the newly constructed railway between Seoul and Sinŭiju (a northern city in North Korea), supposedly granted by Kojong, the

---

189 Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997): 77.

190 2006 K-Film Previews: Kang Wu-sŏk's Hanbando, 2006, "Interview with Director Kang Woo Suk," http://www.twitchfilm.net/archives/006309.html (accessed 25 January 2007).

last king of the Chosŏn dynasty, in a hundred-year-old contract. When the South Korean president (played by Sŏng-ki Ahn) refuses to comply, Japan threatens (another) takeover. To resolve the situation, the president hires historian Min-jae Ch'oe (a poor, unemployed scholar who has nothing but his passionate commitment to Korean history, played by Jae-hyŏn Cho) to search for Kojong's true Imperial Seal (apparently Kojong had a fake seal made for all documents pertaining to Japanese-Korean relations, which would of course void the 1905 Protectorate Treaty that resulted in Japan's annexation of Korea). Eventually this situation evolves into a replication of Kojong's dilemma as the modern-day Korean president faces a potential international conflict as well as a challenge from his prime minister (played by Sŏng-gŭn Mun), who is characterized as a devil's advocate in contrast to the firmly nationalist president.

Along with its efforts to rebuild a sense of Korean-ness, the film attempts to concretize the theme of national solidarity via Queen Min's (another) death performance, in which she is presented in her highly formalized traditional attire (Figure 5.4).

Fig 5.4 Queen Min (Su-yŏn Kang) in her traditional royal attire.

In the previous sequence, a foreshadowing of her end, she has commanded one of her servants to prepare the royal attire [*daeryebok*]. Here the queen's character has been dramatically molded so as to resemble a figure of warrior, commanding an aide to fetch her armor as she prepares for death. Indeed, with extreme long shots the camera emphasizes the overall suspense as it captures the queen marching toward her enemies and delivering her final tribute to the king (Figure 5.5).

Fig 5.5 The queen leaves her last words to the king and performs her death before her assassins and her people in the film *Hanbando*.

Bowing formally, kneeling down in the middle of the palace courtyard, the queen addresses King Kojong (held inside his own quarters):

> Your Majesty! I cannot continue assisting you, please condone such disloyalty!
>
> However, you must not forget...who the real owner of this land is, who will be living in this land, a hundred, two hundred years later. Although we seem to fail right now…you must remember…this land is not fated to be violated by these thieves! As the Mother of this country, I am dying by the hands of these thieves called Japan! Do not forget, my blood, shed by the Japan's evil sheath, has been spilt in this courtyard…Your Majesty, please do make my blood worthwhile….[the Japanese assassins stab the queen and she dies bleeding].[191]

This grandiose monologue illustrates how the film participates in visualizing a profound virtue of the national tradition out of the queen's performance, as her presence is maximized by her ceremonial royal attire. Rather than remaining disguised as one of her servants, she wears both the gigantic headpiece and a bright, extravagant-looking costume. Such extreme Korean royal decor, visualized through the queen, functions as a fetish object. The extravagant visuality of the Empress, together with her solemn death ritual (strongly rooted in her patriotic faith) have the effect of remotely compensating the experienced/imagined emasculation of Chosŏn precisely through the display of an intense ethnic beauty utterly crystallized by the posture of the queen.

These spectacles of regicide survive as the empress' self-sacrificing image, circulating through different cultural venues; their strength and appeal rely upon the

---

[191] Hee-jae Kim, *Hanbando, Scenario Book* (Seoul: Random House Junggang, 2006): 82-85.

media's representation of the empress as an oracle-figure mediating the nation's tragic past and its present/future. Specifically, these popular media texts utilize the double strategy of simultaneously erasing and elevating the feminine associated with the spectacle: even as the scenes discussed here retrieve the daring, bold, proactive image of the Empress, they also mythologize images of self-sacrificing, pure, ethereal womanhood. Similarly, out of the Empress' female body, these productions also invent and solidify the sublime beauty of the national tradition: that is, this iconic reflection of female self-sacrifice is assimilated into a symbol of Korea's struggle for survival as well as for visibility in the global era.

Relying upon a conflation of the images of the patriotic, martyred empress and that of the national body, South Korea's nationally expressed desire for global advancement is redeemed as a progress equally pure and honorable. However, as the empress faces her death in these spectacles, she is dramatized to reenact the image of glorious, self-sacrificing motherhood, intended to elevate her death on an emblematic level. In other words, the scenes apparently keep emphasizing that her death was solely her own, gloriously made through her own choice. However, as they tragically repeat her self-sacrifice, one of the only heroic gestures allotted to feminine virtue, these dramatizations actually render the queen's death not the consequence of her own choice but one that is imposed upon her.

The numerous reproductions or the haunting of the Empress Myŏngsŏng in contemporary South Korea popular culture indicate the continuing usefulness of the image of this tragic woman and her stories. Her significance is constituted as a great picturesque epiphany to be used to claim Korea's legitimacy as a nation and its desire to

be at the center of the global in Asia. She stands at the confluence of national failure and a nation's victorious future, its past and present/future, reconciliation and the remaining ambivalence about Korea's colonial past, self-love and self-hate. The interconnectedness between Empress Myŏngsŏng and 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup also signifies how this figure is a complicated embodiment of contradictory desires and motivations, split between utter hatred on a national level and the desire for a cleansing of past history and the possibility of reconciliation—just as the underlying meaning of 2002 World Cup co-hosted by Korea and Japan has been split between rivalry/hatred and reconciliation, solidarity, and friendship.

2. Post Script

This study's main concern has been to examine how the idea of Broadway gets fixed in South Korea as an amalgamation of unlimited desire for or even obsession with the global (and, inevitably, frustrations about a perceived lack of the global), as illustrated in the makings of the first two theatrical productions. The overall contention behind this process is that Broadway came to exert itself in this local cultural arena as the great symbol of something affluent, and therefore, the epitome of the global. Here, "Broadway" transcends its definition as a mere physical location (i.e. a major theatre district in New York City) and arbitrarily becomes an overstatement. In South Korea, Broadway stands as a fantastical, overblown image that stands for the United States, viewed as a model of how to become rich and famous. Broadway exemplifies how to

address an immediate task for the nation, and a threat. Consequently, I conclude that Broadway stands as the ultimate, global, superior "Other," one that has the power to evaluate and criticize as well as to praise what the local does and accomplishes; on the other hand, the local willingly trusts and relies upon whatever comment this super Other makes on what the local achieved.

The performances discussed here and their modes of representation show the ways in which the local elicits and internalizes the global gaze and adopts its standards as a yardstick that checks and confirms the nation's degree of development. In this project, ultimately, I argue that the Korean performances and their ways of constructing a sense of nation-ness in South Korea envision how the term "the global" comes to designate merely an idealized desire, an empty signifier, or even a persistent lack. At the same time it constructs a scenario in which the global, as a mythical tool of achieving national uniqueness, and constantly intercedes and/or overlaps with the national. It is such phenomena or consciousness that I have termed "global fetishism," and this fetishism pervades the performances under consideration.

As much as the producers of *The Last Empress* wanted to emulate the global products of Broadway, they also sought to retain the local by ensuing that Korea's first Broadway musical would be authentically Korean. In a sense they sought, given the numerous foreign productions flowing into South Korea from the mid-1980s on, to reverse the tide. In addition to a model for emulation, Broadway must also have been appeared to be an immediate threat/competitor as well as a source of frustration for local theatre producers. Indeed, the nominal success of *The Last Empress* and of its producer very much depended on its "Broadway" reputation and *The New York Times* reviews.

In almost every circumstance, "the Broadway" or "the global" is deeply embedded in our consciousness and in our reality as the final, desirable destination we all must pursue—without any particular reasons being asked.

As I have noted, South Korean mainstream media endorsement of "the Broadway" in its coverage of *The Last Empress*'s New York tour was about neither how the production fared in this particular venue nor a true understanding of the location; instead, "the Broadway" has functioned more like a seal of approval that guarantees the advanced development of South Korean culture. A huge number of South Koreans would happily see this musical *because* it went to Broadway. Broadway's approbation allayed any doubt about the production's quality and assured it an attractive reputation. This audience was able to feel proud of this production, as well as their country and themselves, *because* they were watching a musical that went to Broadway—from their seats, they could experience the American Dream and envision their own success in the context of a global narrative and index of prestige.

By contrast, the performance of *Nanta* actively converses with "the Broadway" so as to turn a profit and launch a substantial brand-making strategy. Unlike *The Last Empress*' status as the first Korean musical on Broadway, *Nanta* did not endorse such designation as an empty signifier or a vague symbol of national integrity and success. Although Broadway success still remains a great fantasy for *Nanta*, here it is utilized as an effective device for increasing name-value and profit wherein the term itself becomes a tool for enhancing the production's regional (i.e., Asian) prosperity, as the first contemporary Asian performance that succeeded on Broadway. Imagined and self-

designated as the "Broadway production in Seoul," *Nanta* attracts Asian tourists to Korea and promotes the experience of Broadway as available in their region.

In this dissertation, I demonstrate that "the Broadway," as the comprehensive reflection of the global powerhouse (i.e. the U.S.) interacts with other definitions and images of global hegemonic entities. My analyses of the performances have been designed to extend the discussion of how the term "Broadway" could function as an another name for Hollywood, Ivy League, *The New York Times*, CNN, OECD, English, and so forth. With these so-called global entities as a set of evaluative criteria or immanent goals, we constantly remind ourselves to strive to emulate and catch up with these power structures, which are clearly justified and idealized as validations of personal as well as national development and interests.

Consequently, we incorporate such global entities as an important measurement of our own conditions and status. In today's South Korea suddenly reborn as one of the top-tier countries just by joining the OECD, where a person who speaks English well is recognized as a competitive citizen and thus a national asset (whereas a person who can't speak a word of English is immediately marked as a sign of failure and deficiency), anyone could turn into a national hero just by having his/her name mentioned in Hollywood or the *New York Times*.

By and large, as Koreans have become exposed to the global, they are both explicitly and implicitly encouraged to succeed by its standards. They either love or hate themselves according to whatever self-reflections they imagine in this global mirror. As illustrated in "The Global Etiquette Era series," a media pre-event (campaign) for the 2002 World Cup, we are more or less split between self-hate and self-love: while

always trying to catch up with imaginary global standards, Koreans abandon or alter whatever might be seen as indecent in their customs and traditions. This process of editing and redefining occurs in tandem with a desire to construct and embrace their sense of Korean-ness as evidence of national superiority and pride. In the end, they confidently love and are proud of themselves merely because CNN has mentioned something positive about them, or their nation.

My dissertation represents only one aspect of the emergence of South Korean transnational theatre in the mid-1990s, its domestic as well as overseas reception, and conversations about it—the first generation of such productions. Since the 2000s, more South Korean performances including *Jump* (a martial arts non-verbal performance), *Maria Maria* (a musical), *Musical Winter Sonata*, and *Linie 1* [Line 1] (a rock musical), have not only gone transnational, largely to other East Asian countries such as Japan, Taiwan, and China, but have also clearly demonstrated differences from and similarities to their predecessors in terms of content, marketing, and production rationales. These new transnational performances evolve around the question of being Korean as well as being Korean in relation to the Asian region and the global.

The underlying hope and intentions for good performance and well-being embedded in this dissertation aspires to open new ground not only for Korean Studies but also for other fields involving global-local interactions and studies about literature, culture, performance, and how these are linked to social relations. Rather than approaching the local as the antithesis of the global and thus considering it solely as grounds for opposition, or as a fetishistic entity, we should engage in productive debates about what it means to be a subject representing the complexity of today's Korea, or the

Asian region—where the pursuit of the authenticity or purity no longer exists, for that is a fetishistic illusion.

Through the case study developed in this project, I suggest that we recognize performance as a compelling point of analysis that supports sensitivity to and understanding of embodied practice as well as awareness of the workings of power structures. Performance as a lens could very well provide a way of knowing as well as a way of remembering and transferring cultural knowledge and identity—enabling us to prepare ourselves to engage in a new endeavor mingled with frustrations, tensions, hopes, and desires. Therein lies our future, as well as our hopes for better politics, and better scenarios to represent them.

Bibliography

A-Com International. n.d.. "About *The Last Empress*." Last Empress the Musical. http://www.thelastempress.com (accessed 8 September 2007).

---. n.d. "Company." http://www.iacom.co.kr (accessed 8 September 2007).

---. n.d. "Greeting." http://www.iacom.co.kr (accessed 8 September 2007).

---. n.d. "Why do we call Empress Myŏngsŏng as "Queen Min (*Minbi*)." http://www.iacom.co.kr (accessed 8 September 2007).

Ahn, Sŏng-ki, Jae-Hyŏn Cho, Su-yŏn Kang. *Hanbando* (Korean Peninsula). DVD. Directed by Wu-sŏk Kang. Seoul, South Korea: CJ Entertainment, 2006.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Community: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London & New York: Verso, 1983.

Andrews, David. "Introduction: Playing with the Pleasure Principle," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 105.2 (2006): 269-276.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Arko Arts Library & Information Center. n.d. "Script Archive." Nanta, http://artsonline.arko.or.kr/navigator?act=playreadview&idx=426. (accessed 7 December 2007).

Aslama, Minna, and Mervi Pantti. "Flagging Finnishness: Reproducing National Identity in Reality Television." In *Television & New Media*, 8.1(2007): 49-67.

Bassnett, Susan. *Constructing Cultures*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998.

---. ed. *Post-Colonial Translation*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Bennett, Susan. *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Bharucha, Rustom. "Under the sign of 'Asia': rethinking 'creative unity' beyond the 'rebirth of traditional arts.'" *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 2.1 (2001): 151-156.

Billig, Michael. *Banal Nationalism*. London & Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre*. Translated and Edited by John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964.

The Broadway Asia Company. 2008. "About Us," http://www.broadwayasia.com (accessed 11 January 2008).

Bronfen, Elisabeth. *Over Her Dead Body: Death, femininity and the aesthetic*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Calhoun, Craig. *Nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1997.

Case, Sue-Ellen. "Musical *The Last Empress*: A Korean Staging of Woman and Nation." *Australasian Drama Studies* 49 (2006): 10-19.

Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Chen, Kuan-Hsing. "Not Yet the Postcolonial Era: The (Super) Nation-State and Transnationalism of Cultural Studies: Response to Ang and Stratton." *Cultural Studies* 10.1 (1996): 37-70.

---. ed. *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Cho, Sumi K (Cho, Su-mi K). "Korean Americans vs. African Americans: Conflict and Construction." In *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising*. Edited by Robert Gooding-Williams. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Cho, Younghan (Cho, Yŏng-han). "The National Crisis and De/Reconstructing Nationalism in South Korea during the IMF Intervention." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 9.1 (2008): 82-96.

Ch'oe, Jang-jip. *Han'guk minjokjuŭi ŭi chogŏn gwa chŏnmang* (Condition and Future of Korean Nationalism). Seoul: Nanam, 1995.

Cho Han, Hae-joang (Cho Han, Hye-jŏng). " 'You are entrapped in an imaginary well': the formation of subjectivity within compressed development—a feminist critique of modernity and Korean culture." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 1.1 (2000): 49-69.

---. "*P'ip'a ŭi Wŏldŭk'ŏp ŭl nŏmŏsŏ*" (Beyond FIFA's World Cup). *Dangdae* 20 (2002):

24- 47.

Cho Han, Hae-joang, Yoshitake Mori, Toshiya Ueno, and Hiroki Ogasawara. "Introduction." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5.1 (2004): 4-6.

Choi, Chungmoo (Ch'oe, Chŏng-mu). "The Discourse of Decolonization and Popular Memory: South Korea." *Positions* 1.1 (1993): 77-102.

Choi, Yoon Sung (Ch'oe, Yun-sŏng). "Football and the South Korean imagination: South Korea and the 2002 World Cup tournaments." In *Football Goes East: Business, culture and the people's game in China, Japan and South Korea*. Edited by W. Manzenreiter and John Horne. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Chow, Rey. *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading between West and East*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

---. *Primitive Passions*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

Choy, Lee Weng. "Authenticity, Reflexivity, and Spectacle; or, The Rise of New Asia is Not the End of the World." *positions* 12.3 (2004): 643-666.

Chua, Beng Huat. "Conceptualizing an East Asian Popular culture." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 5.2 (2004): 200-221.

Chung, Hongik (Chung, Hong-ik). "Government involvement in football in Korea." In *Football Goes East: Business, culture and the people's game in China, Japan and South Korea.* Edited by W. Manzenreiter and John Horne. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Clifford, James. ed. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Dave, Shilpa. ed. *East Main Street: Asian American Popular Culture*. New York: New

York University Press, 2005.

Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books, 1995.

Devan Janadas. "Strange Bedfellows: Lee Kuan Yew and Samuel Huntington." Unpublished essay. Quoted in Choy (2004).

Dirlik, Arif. "Intimate Others: [private] nations and diasporas in an age of globalization." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5.3 (2004): 491-502.

The Dreams Come True (*Kkum ŭn iruwoe jinda*). DVD. Directed by Korean Football Association. South Korea: KBS Media, 2002.

Erdentug, Aygen. ed. *Urban Ethnic Encounters: The Spatial Consequences*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

---. "Algeria Unveiled." In *A Dying Colonialism*. Translated by Haakon Chevalier. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1965.

---. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967.

Foster, Hal. ed. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983.

Gallagher, Mark. "What's So Funny about *Iron Chef*?" *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, 31.4 (2004): 176-184.

Guibernau, Montserrat. "Globalization and the Nation-state." In *Understanding Nationalism*. Edited by Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2001.

Han, Seung-Mi (Han, Sŭng-mi). "Consuming the modern: globalization, things Japanese, and the politics of cultural identity in Korea." *The Journal of Pacific Asia* 6

(2000): 7-26.

Havely, Joe. “Korea’s Cup Marathon: ‘Pride of Asia.’” 22 December 2003. CNN.com. http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLDcup/06/25/korea.progress/index.html (accessed 31 January 2008).

Held, David and Anthony McGrew. *Globalization/Anti-Globalization*. Cambridge: Polity, 2002.

Hong, Seong-Tae (Hong, Sŏng-t’ae). “The World Cup, the Red Devils, and related arguments in Korea.” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5.1 (2004): 89-105.

Horne, John and Wolfram Manzenreiter, “Accounting for Mega-Events: Forecast and Actual Impacts of the 2002 Football World Cup Finals on the Host Countries Japan/Korea,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 39.2 (June 2004): 187-203.

---. eds. “Football, cultural, globalization: Why professional football has been going East.” In *Football Goes East: Business, culture and the people’s game in China, Japan and South Korea*. Edited by W. Manzenreiter and John Horne. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Hoy, Mikita. “Joyful Mayhem: Bakhtin, Football Songs, and the Carnivalesque.” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 14 (1994): 289-304.

Hyŏn Kyŏng, “*Yŏsŏngdo dangdanghan juch’e*” [Women as Rightful Subjects/Changing Authority, conformity into Equality and Peace], *Hangyŏre sinmun*, 3 July 2002.

Im, Ji-hyŏn. *Minjokjuŭi nŭn banyŏkida* (Nationalism is Betrayal). Seoul: Sonamu, 1999.

Im, Kwon-t’aek, dir. *Sopyŏnje*. Perf. Myŏng-kon Kim, Jŏng-hae Oh, and Kyu-ch’ŏl Kim. Tae Hŭng Production Co., LTD, 1993.

Iwabuchi, Koichi. *Recentering globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2002.

---. ed. Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV Dramas. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004.

Jackson, Shannon. "Why Modern Plays are not Culture: Disciplinary Blind Spots." *Modern Drama* 44.1 (2001): 31-51.

---. "Partial Publicity and Gendered Remembering: Figuring Women in Culture and Performance." *Cultural Studies* 17.5 (2003): 691-712.

Jager, Sheila Miyoshi. *Narratives of Nation Building in Korea: A Genealogy of Patriotism*. Armonk: An East Gate Book, 2003.

James, David E., and Kyung Hyun Kim, eds. *Im Kwon-Taek: The Making of a Korean National Cinema*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002

Jonas, Susan et al. *Dramaturgy in American Theater: A Source Book*. Forth Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1997.

Jŏng, Jin-wung. "'*Bulgŭnmulgyŏl hyŏnsang*' *ŭl tonghaebon yokmang ŭi munhwa jŏngch'ihak*" (Reading the 'Red Flow' during the 2002 World Cup: Cultural Politics of Desire). *Dangdae* 20 (2002): 8-23.

K-Film Previews 2006: Kang Wu-sŏk's *Hanbando*. 2006. "Interview with Director Kang Woo Suk." http://www.twitchfilm.net/archives/006309.html (accessed 25 January 2007).

Kang, Myung Koo (Kang, Myŏng-ku). "Discourse politics toward neo-liberal globalization." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 1.3 (2000): 443-456.

Kang, Sangjung (Kang, Sang-jung). "Post-colonialism and Diasporic space in Japan."

Inter-Asia Cultural Studies 2.1 (2001): 137-144.

---. *orientalism ŭl nŏmŏsŏ* (*Beyond Orientalism*). Seoul: Yeesan, 1997.

Kendall, Laurel. ed., *Under Construction: The Gendering of Modernity, Class, and Consumption in The Republic of Korea*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001.

Kim, Elaine H. "Home is Where the *Han* Is: A Korean American Perspective on the Los Angeles Upheavals." In *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising*. Edited by Robert Gooding-Williams. New York: Routledge, 1993.

---. *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*. eds. Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Kim, Hee-jae. *Hanbando: Scenario Book*. Seoul: Random House Joongang, 2006.

Kim, Hyun Mee (Kim, Hyŏn-mi). "Work, nation and hypermasculinity: the 'woman' question in the economic miracle and crisis in South Korea." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 2.1 (2001): 53-68.

---. "Feminization of the 2002 World Cup and women's fandom." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5.1 (2004): 42-51

---. *Globŏl sidae ŭi munhwa bŏnyŏk* [*Cultural Translation in a Global* Era], (Seoul: Tto hana ŭi munhwa, 2005.

Kim, Kyung Hyun (Kim, Kyŏng-hyŏn). *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Kim, Su-yi et al. *Hallyu wa 21seki munhwa bijŏn* (Hallyu and the Cultural Vision of the 21st Century). Seoul: Ch'ŏngdonggŏwul Publishing, 2006.

Kim, Soyoung (Kim, So-yŏng). "The birth of the local feminist sphere in the global era:

'trans-cinema' and *Yosongjang*." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 4.1 (2003): 10-24.

Kim, Young-sam . *Korea's Reform and Globalization*. Seoul: Korean Overseas Information Service, 1996.

Ko, Mi-suk. *Han'guk ŭi kŭndaesŏng, kŭ kiwon ŭl ch'ajasŏ* (Finding the Origins of Korean Modernity). Seoul: Ch'aeksaesang, 2001.

---. "Fascism at the turn of the century, that Spectacular Transformation." Unpublished paper, Seoul, Korea. Quoted in Haekyoung Lee (2002).

Kondo, Dorinne. *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Korea Broadcasting System. 2001. "About Empress Myŏngsŏng and the Korean History Drama." Drama Empress Myŏngsŏng. http://www.kbs.co.kr/endprogram/drama/myungsung/about/plan/plan.html (accessed 12 July 2007).

Korean Integrated Newspaper Database System (KINDS). n.d. http://www.kinds.or.kr.

The Korean Overseas Information Service. 1999-2007. "Images of Korea," http://www.korea.net/kois/eng_vns_list.asp?ecode=video&category=Images%20of%20korea (accessed 11 January 2008).

Kwon, Hyŏk-bŏm. "*Wŏldŭk'ŏp 'kukmin ch'ŭkje,' doknipjŏk jisŏng ŭn ŏdie itnŭnka*" (South Korea, sucked into the black hole of the World Cup, the 'Kukmin Festival'). *Dangdae* 20 (2002): 62-95.

The Last Empress, Compact Disc, ℗and©2002 A-Com International Co., Ltd.

Lee, Haekyoung (Yi, Hye-kyŏng). "The Gazes of the Other upon the Life of Empress

Myŏngsŏng and Its Portrayal in *The Last Empress*." *Feminist Studies in English Literature* 10.2 (2002): 141-161.

Lee, Josephine. *Performing Asian America: Race and Ethnicity on the Contemporary Stage*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997.

---. "Bodies, Revolutions, and Magic: Cultural Nationalism and Racial Fetishism." *Modern Drama* 44.1 (2001): 72-90.

Lefevere, André. *Translating Literature*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1992.

Lessnof, Michael H. *Ernest Gellner and Modernity*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002.

Let's Learn the Cheering Song. SK Telecom, 2002; 29 sec; from TVCF, WMV, http://www.tvcf.co.kr/CfKorea/MediaView/CmKoViewPrem.asp?code=2456cmko&ADZINESPCBANK= (accessed November 10, 2007).

Levermore, Roger. *Sport and International Relations: An Emerging Relationship*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Lewis, James and Amadu Sesay. eds., *Korea and Globalization: Politics, Economics and Culture*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002.

Ling, L.H.M. "Sex Machine: Global Hypermasculinity ad Images of the Asian Woman in Modernity." *positions* 7.2 (1999): 277-307.

Lionnet, Francoise. ed. *Minor Transnationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.

MacAloon, J.J. "Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies." In *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural*

Performance. Edited by J.J. MacAloon. Philadelphia: A Publication of the Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984.

---. "The Theory of Spectacle: Reviewing Olympics Ethnography." In *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup*. Edited by A. Tomlinson and C. Young. New York: State University of New York Press, 2005.

Manzenreiter, Wolfram. "Her place in the 'House of Football': Globalization, cultural sexism and women's football in East Asian societies." In *Football Goes East: Business, culture and the people's game in China, Japan and South Korea,* edited by Wolfram Manzenreiter and John Horne. New York: Routledge, 2004.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Mercer, Kobena. "Welcome to the Jungle: Identity and Diversity in Postmodern Politcs." In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Edited by Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990.

Ministry of Public Information. n.d. "Government advertisement data room." http://www.allim.go.kr. (accessed 3 February 2008).

Morely, David et al. *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Moy, James S. "David Henry Hwang's 'M. Butterfly' and Philip Kan Gotanda's 'Yankee Dawg You Die': Responding Chinese American Marginality on the American Stage." *Theatre Journal* 42.1 (1990): 48-56.

"Musical The Last Empress." *Munhwaga Junggye* (Cultural Reports). Seoul

Broadcasting System, Seoul. 25 Mar. 2005.

Nanta. Unofficial Recording. PMC Production, Seoul. n.d.

The National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts. 2003. "About Gugak," Samulnori, http://www.ncktpa.go.kr/eng/aboutg/trad_ins_view.jsp?gugak_id=17 (accessed 3 January 2008).

National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage. 2002. "About Intangible Cultural Heritage Policy." http://www.nricp.go.kr (accessed 30 August 2007).

Nogawa, Haruo. "An international comparison of the motivations and experiences of volunteers at the 2002 World Cup," *Football Goes East: Business, culture and the people's game in China, Japan and South Korea,* edited by Wolfram Manzenreiter and John Horne. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Noh, Myŏng-wu. "*Saeroŭn kunchung ŭi chulhyŏn*" (The Emergence of a New Mass). *Munhwa Gwahak*, no. 31 (2002): 205-6.

Noh, Yŏng-hae. "Exploring the 'Kukmin' musicals of the late 1990s South Korea: *The Last Empress* and *Linie 1—Das Musikal*." *Music and Culture* 3.3 (2000): 61-90.

Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire." *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24.

Ogasawara, Hiroki. "The banality of football: 'Race', nativity, and how Japanese football critics failed to digest the planetary spectacle." In *Football Goes East: Business, culture and the people's game in China, Japan and South Korea.* Edited by W. Manzenreiter and John Horne. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Oseland, James. "Heart & Soul." *American Theatre* 15.7 (1998): n.p.

Paek, Won-dam. *Tongasia ŭi munhwa sŏnt'aek, hallyu* [East Asia's Choice, the Korean

Wave]. Seoul: Pentagram, 2005.

Parker, Andrew and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, eds. *Performativity and Performance*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge, 1993.

PMC. n.d., "Introduction," Nonverbal Performance Nanta, http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr/en/nanta/intro_synopsis.asp (accessed 21 December 2007).

---. n.d., "History," Nonverbal Performance Nanta, http://nanta.i-pmc.co.kr/en/nanta/intro_history.asp (accessed 21 December 2007).

---. n.d., "Production Note," Nonverbal Performance Nanta, http://nanta.i-mc.co.kr/en/nanta/intro_pnote.asp (accessed 21 December 2007).

Pollock, Della. ed. *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Red Devil Clapping. SK Telecom, 2002; 32 sec; from TVCF, WMV, http://www.tvcf.co.kr/CfKorea/MediaView/CmKoViewPrem.asp?code=2455cmko&ADZINESPCBANK= (accessed November 10, 2007).

Ritzer, George. ed. *McDonaldization: The Reader*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2002.

Robertson, Roland. "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity." In *Global Modernities*. Edited by Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson. London: Sage Publications, 1995.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.

---. "Third World Intellectuals and Metropolitan Culture." *Raritan* 9.3 (1990): 27-50.

Schaffer, Kay and Sidonie Smith. Eds. *The Olympics at the Millennium: Power, Politics*

and the Games. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000.

Schechner, Richard. *Ritual, Play and Performance*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1977.

---. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

Shim, Doobo (Shim, Du-bo). "Hybridity and the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia," *Media, Culture & Society*, 28.1 (2006): 35.

Shin, Gi-wook (Shin, Gi-wuk). *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, politics, and legacy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Shin, Kwang Young (Shin, Kwang-yŏng). "The discourse of crisis and the crisis of discourse," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 1.3 (December 2000): 427-442.

Shin, Yun-hwan et al., *Tongsia ŭi Hallyu* (East Asia's Hallyu). Yongin: Jŏnyewon, 2006.

Smith, Anthony. *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Sŏ, Yŏn-ho and Sang-wu Yi. *Uriyŏngŭk paeknyŏn* (100 years of Korean Theatre). Seoul: Hyŏnam Sa, 2000.

Song, Sŭng-hwan. *Segyerŭl nantahan namja: munhwa CEO, Song Sŭng-hwan* [A Man Who Smacked the World: Sŭng-hwan Song, the Culture CEO]. Seoul: Bookian, 2003.

Spivak, Gayatri. A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Steen, Shannon. "Melancholy Bodies: Racial Subjectivity and Whiteness in O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*." *Theatre Journal* 52 (2000): 339-359.

Taussig, Michael. *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

Taylor, Diana. *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War."* Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

---. *The Archive and the Repertoire: performing cultural memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Tomlinson, Alan and Young, Christopher. "Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Global Sports Event-An Introduction." In *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup*. Edited by A. Tomlinson and C. Young. New York: State University of New York Press, 2005.

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Chicago: Aldine, 1969.

---. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982.

Ueno, Toshiya. "Toward a trans-local comparative analysis of the 2002 World Cup." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5.1 (2004): 115-123.

Whang, Soon-Hee (Hwang, Sun-hee). "Korean and Japan 2002: Public Space and Popular Celebration." In *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup*. Edited by Alan Tomlinson & Christopher Young. New York: State University of New York Press, 2005.

Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

---. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Yi, Dong-yŏn. "The 'Red Devils' and subject formation: nationalism or taste of style?" *Munhwa Gwahak* 31 (2002): 163-177.

Yi, Jeong Duk (Yi, Jŏng-dŏk). "Globalization and Recent Changes to Daily Life in the Republic of Korea." In *Korea and Globalization*. Edited by James Lewis and Amadu Sesay. London: Routledge Curzon, 2002.

Yi, Mi-yŏn, Jun-ho Hŏ, and Jun-ho Chŏng. *The Lost Empire*. VCD. Directed by Eŭn-t'aek Cha. Seoul, South Korea: GM Production, 2001.

Yi, Min-won. *Myŏngsŏng Hwanghu sihae wa Akwanp'ach'ŏn* (The Assassination of Empress Min and Kojong's Escape to the Russian Consulate in Seoul). Seoul: Kukhak Jaryowon, 2002.

Yi, Mun-yŏl. *Yŏwu Sanyang* (The Fox Hunt). Seoul: Sallim, 1995.

---. *Sŏnt'aek* (The Choice). Seoul: Minŭmsa, 1997.

---. *The Last Empress*. Unpublished manuscript. Translated by Georgina St. George.

Yoo, Sun-young (Yu, Sŏn-yŏng). "Embodiment of American modernity in colonial Korea." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 2.3 (2001): 423-441.

Young, Robert. Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race. London: Routledge, 1995.

Yu, Sang-ch'ŏl et al. *Hallyu DNA ŭi bimil* (The Secrets of Hallyu DNA). Seoul: Itreebook, 2005.

Yun, Ho-jin. "*Myŏngsŏng Hwanghu ŭi Brodŭwai jinch'ul gwa sŏnggwa*" (Staging *The Last Empress* on Broadway). Lecture. Kukmin University, Seoul, Korea, 12 November 1998.

Yun, Sang-ch'ŏl and Min-sŏk Ahn. *Woldŭk'ŏp shinhwa wa hyŏnshil* (World Cup, Myth

and Reality: Sociology of Football). Seoul: Hanwul Academy, 2002.

Yuval-Davis, Nira and Floya Anthias, eds. *Woman-Nation-State*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989.

Yuval-Davis, Nira. "Nationalism, Feminism and Gender Relations." In *Understanding Nationalism*. Edited by Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2001.

Vita

Hyunjung Lee was born in Seoul, Korea on November 24, 1977, the daughter of Youngsoon Hong Lee and Jaegil Lee. After completing her highschool studies at The International School of Geneva, La Chataigneraie, in 1995, she entered Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in 1996 majoring in English, and received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from this university in February 2000. In the fall of 2000, she entered New York University for her graduate studies in the area of Humanities and Social Thought, and achived the degree of Master of Arts in May 2002. Upon graduation, from the fall of 2002, she continued her doctoral studies at The University of Texas at Austin in Comparative Literature. During her years at UT-Austin, Lee also worked as Teaching Assistant and as Instructor in the English department and in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing. She was also employed as a writing consultant at the Undergraduate Writing Center at Texas from 2004-2007.

Permanent address: 14-903 Shindong-A Apartment, Seobingo-Dong, Yongsan-Ku, Seoul, Korea

This dissertation was typed by the author.